DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 334 103 SO 021 201

TITLE	Port Arthur Alive: Exploring Past and Present, 4. Eyewitness.
INSTITUTION	Tasmanian Education Dept., Hobart (Australia).
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-7246-1342-0
PUB DATE	87
NOTE	74p.; For related documents, see SO 021 198-202.
AVAILABLE FROM	Marketing Officer, Department of Education and the Arts, 71 Letitia, North Hobart, Tasmania, Australia 7000 ($35.00 Australian for 5 parts).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Correctional Institutions; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *History; *History Instruction; Instructional Materials; *Primary Sources; *Prisoners; Social Studies; Student Projects; *Student Research; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	*Australia (Tasmania); Nineteenth Century History

ABSTRACT

This document presents part 4 of a five part project in which students of the Tasmanian region of Australia are invited to explore the history of Port Arthur, a 19th century penal colony located in Tasmania. The project is based on three ideas: (1) studying history can be educational and enjoyable; (2) imagination is an essential part of studying history; and (3) history is most of all a means by which to seek to understand the present--ones self and society as it exists now. Part 4 of the project features eyewitness accounts about various features of the penal colony based on the words of persons who actually lived at Port Arthur either as convicts or free persons. Visitor accounts also are included. There are twelve subjects covered: (1) dockyard and shipbuilding; (2) transport by sea; (3) murder; (4) general descriptions; (5) punishment and reform; (6) industry at Port Arthur; (7) contact between convict and free; (8) religion and morality; (9) escape; (10) convict ballads; (11) timber-getting; and (12) the coal mines. (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED334103

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

H. HOCKING

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SO 021 201

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

4 EYEWITNESS

PORT ARTHUR ALIVE

EXPLORING PAST AND PRESENT

4 EYEWITNESS

A JOINT PROJECT OF THE NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
AND THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF TASMANIA

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The children's work reproduced in this book is from copies held by the Port Arthur Education Centre. There are many schools represented and we thank them all for allowing us to share their students' work.

First published 1987

ISBN 0 7246 1342 0

Education Department, Tasmania, Australia 85-86

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CONTENTS

EYEWITNESS 1 Dockyard and shipbuilding 5

EYEWITNESS 2 Transport by sea 8

EYEWITNESS 3 Murder 10

EYEWITNESS 4 General descriptions 12

EYEWITNESS 5 Punishment and reform 15

EYEWITNESS 6 Industry at Port Arthur 19

EYEWITNESS 7 Contact between convict and free 20

EYEWITNESS 8 Religion and morality 22

EYEWITNESS 9 Escape 26

EYEWITNESS 10 Convict ballads 30

EYEWITNESS 11 Timber-getting 44

EYEWITNESS 12 The Coal Mines 47

EYEWITNESS 13 Health, sickness, death 50

EYEWITNESS 14 Controlling the convicts 54

EYEWITNESS 15 Routine procedures 58

EYEWITNESS 16 Leisure for the free 61

EYEWITNESS 17 A soldier's life 64

EYEWITNESS 18 A political prisoner 67

As you are reading this book, you will notice that some names appear in bold type within paragraphs. If you would like more information about any of these people, see *Profiles* (Part 5 of *Port Arthur Alive*).

Dockyard and shipbuilding

Most of Port Arthur's shipbuilding was done on the northern shore of Mason's Cove near the Shipwright's House. There was an early boat-slip where the lime kiln is now situated; a later, larger one was located where the large depression in the ground leads down to the sea. Many large vessels were produced here, including the schooner Eliza *(a fast gunboat), the whaling ship* Wallaby, *the convict transport* Lady Franklin *(later named* Emily Downing*), the barque* Fanny, *steam-boats and numerous whale-boats. John Watson was the first Master Shipwright, from 1834 to 1837. He was followed by* **David Hoy** *(1837–1848). Large gangs of convicts were involved, both at the yard and in timber gangs supplying spars from the bush.*

Laborious work

David Burn, 1842

The dockyard gang is scarcely less laborious than the [timber] carrying, the men being frequently immersed in water to the neck while securing naval timber to the launches for the purpose of transport . . . It must be borne in mind that no beasts of burden are permitted either at Port Arthur or the probation stations, and that, consequently, all the drudgery of labour [see Eyewitness 11] is borne by the convicts.

A busy scene

David Burn, 1842

At the dock-yard we found most of the people busily prepared to heave down HMS *Favourite* in order to thoroughly refit her—another launch for the *Lady Franklin*, a lighter, and an exquisitely proportioned 18 ton gun-boat, calculated to carry a long 32-pounder, were in a very forward state . . .

The *Eliza*, built at the dockyard

David Burn, 1842

We travelled to Port Arthur on board the *Eliza*, a beautiful craft about 150 tons, built at Port Arthur in 1835, and named after the wife of the late Lieutenant-Governor [Eliza Arthur]. It was designed partly as a yacht for Sir George Arthur, and partly as a cruiser to be employed in chase of any runaways.

Interesting and extensive

James Ross, 1837

From the garden we walked along the road until we arrived at the dockyard, which we had barely time to inspect before night fall. This place . . . was both interesting and extensive. Numerous boats and other small vessels were building and repairing for the Marine Service at Hobart town. A large ship of about 300 tons was building as a coal vessel to convey the coals from the coal mine [see Eyewitness 12] . . . to Hobart town. A beautiful model of a a new

vessel had just been chalked out on the large loft set apart for that purpose . . . The men employed at [the dockyard] are marched home after work and safely shut up until the ensuing morning in the prisoners' barracks. [See Eyewitness 4, 5.]

A race

Colonial Times, *October 1843*

On Saturday last on the waters of the Derwent occurred a trial of speed between the schooner *Eleanor*, recently launched at Port Arthur and designed by Mr Hoy, and the *Eliza*, also built at Port Arthur and designed by Mr Watson . . . Eleanor proved the faster and at the conclusion was ahead by 50 minutes.

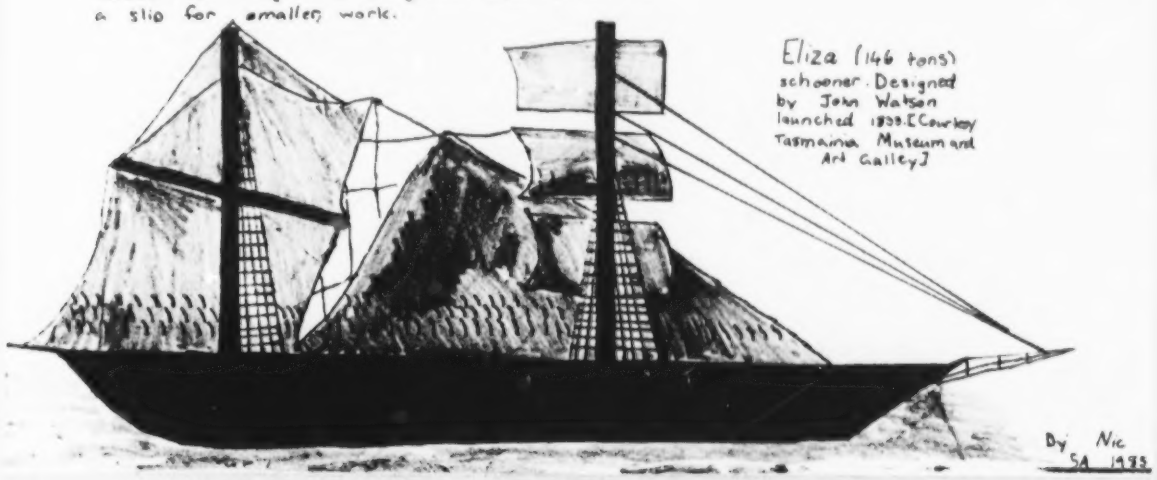
Diary entry

Journal of Charles O'Hara Booth, 13 February 1838

Signal from Hobart—'Settlement' Acquaint the Commandant that His Ex. The Lt. Governor wishes the Schooner [just finished at the dockyard] to be called 'The Booth' [see Profile 31]—'The Booth' accordingly was gently glided into the silvery deep [on a four-wheel'd truck] at 10 A.M. Christened by the Admiral's [Old Hoey] Bridge. ['Old Hoey' was **David Hoy**, master shipwright.]

SHIP BUILDING

By 1836 the port Arthur shipbuilding industry had became part of the settlement, despite some official questioning of its viability. The basic layout of the yard that was to function a dozen more years had been established by John Watson.
There were two dwellings, the shipwright's house and a one-roomed overseers hut next to the garden at the top of the Dockyard area. (The building called Dockyard cottage did not exist until after the Dockyard closed.) Numerous other building and operations emphasised the sites industrial function. There were two boat sheds for joinery sail macking, design and other indoor work, a storage shed, ~~shop~~ two steamers for bending wood; a smiths shop for the many metal-working tasks; two sawpits for cutting timber to size; docks for major building and repair jobs and a slip for smaller work.



Eliza (146 tons) schooner. Designed by John Watson launched 1833. [Courtesy Tasmania Museum and Art Gallery]

By Nic SA 1988

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Diary entry—launching

Journal of Thomas Lempriere, 29 December 1837

This morning the new barque was launched. She was named, or as it is commonly called, christened, by my **Charlotte** [Mrs Lempriere, see Profile 23]. The 'Fanny' is in honour of Sir George Arthur's youngest daughter. She went off in grand style . . . The barque is 286 tons. Captain Booth [and others] were launched in the vessel.

LOOKING FURTHER: Background 7, Eyewitness 6 and **Eyewitness 12** tell of other industrial activity at Port Arthur. **Eyewitness 11** is about timber gangs, some of which supplied the dockyard. **Eyewitness 9** includes a story of an escape involving the dockyard. **Profile 13** is about David Hoy, master shipwright. Booth is the subject of **Profile 31**, and Lempriere of **Profile 3**.

EYEWITNESS 2

Transport by sea

By the time they reached Port Arthur, most convicts had endured at least two sea voyages, and perhaps much more time imprisoned in the holds of prison hulks. First, there was the four-month sea voyage from Britain via the Cape Colony in Africa to Australia. Then, after being sentenced to servitude at Port Arthur, there was the journey there, usually from Hobart Town but sometimes from Sydney or other Australian settlements. Even from Hobart, with ships travelling through Storm Bay and around Cape Raoul into 'the Port', the sea journey could be arduous.

Journey to Van Diemen's Land

Linus Miller, political prisoner, 1841

All hands were divested of irons soon after we sailed [because of the intolerable noise they made] . . . A school was opened during a part of the day, and all were allowed to attend who chose . . . I was chosen to teach . . . but with so much wickedness going on the school had to be abandoned.

Health was generally good—prisoners were allowed on deck and were well fed (see Eyewitness 13)—and were even allowed a portion of wine; after a drink or two, however, fighting was common among prisoners.

Shipboard discipline

William Derricourt, convict, about 1840

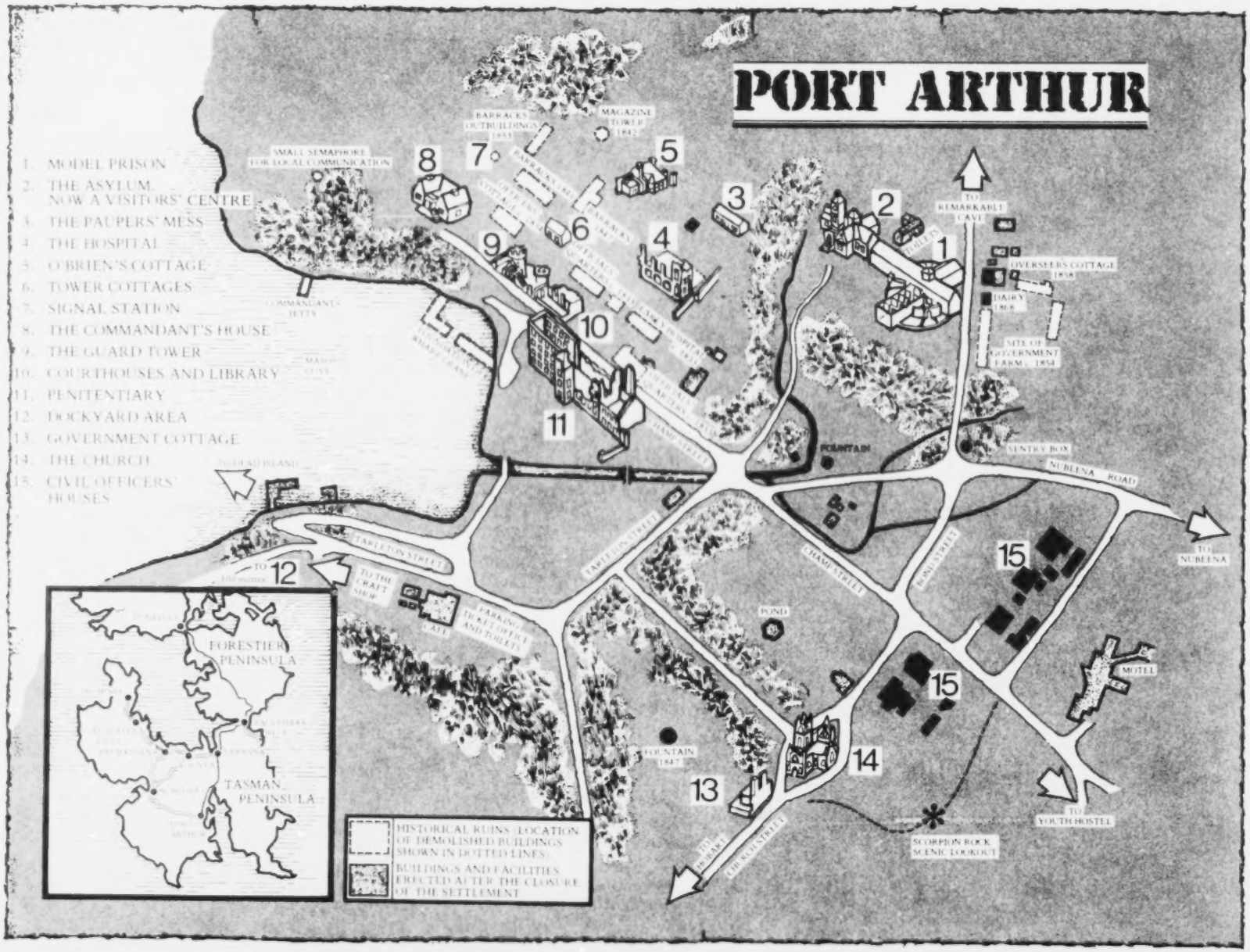
On boarding the vessel [at Hobart Town bound for Port Arthur] we were put down in the hold, where there was stretched a long cable, one end of which was passed round the capstan. To this cable we were fettered. Passing the Iron Pot, a small island down the harbour, we all began singing, shouting and making a great noise. We were told that if we did not quieten when told we should be forced to do so. We still persisted, when two or three turns were given to the capstan, tightening the cable, and we were held up by our fettered feet, and with our heads downward, until we promised good behaviour.

On the Port Arthur transport *Isabella*

Miller, 1841

The space between decks was about four feet [120 cm] . . . In this space the prisoners were wedged in, taking turns to sit because there was insufficient floor for all . . . The movement of the ship threw the prisoners about, one on top of the other in excruciating pain because of the manacles holding them. The journey to Port Arthur took thirty-six hours; by the time we neared our destination we were wading in vomit.

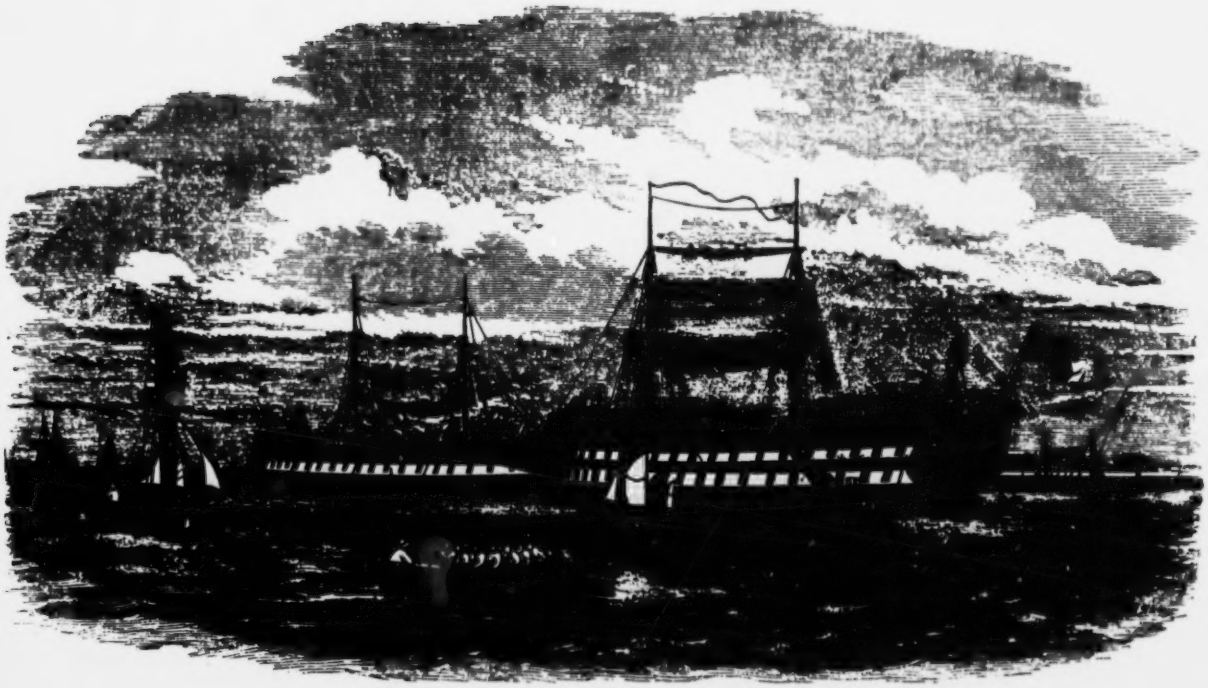
12


PORT ARTHUR
1. MODEL PRISON
2. THE ASYLUM, NOW A VISITORS' CENTRE
3. THE PAUPERS' MESS
4. THE HOSPITAL
5. O'BRIEN'S COTTAGE
6. TOWER COTTAGES
7. SIGNAL STATION
8. THE COMMANDANT'S HOUSE
9. THE GUARD TOWER
10. COURTHOUSES AND LIBRARY
11. PENITENTIARY
12. DOCKYARD AREA
13. GOVERNMENT COTTAGE
14. THE CHURCH
15. CIVIL OFFICERS' HOUSES
BARRACKS OUTBUILDINGS 1853
MAGAZINE TOWER 1842
SMALL SEMAPHORE FOR LOCAL COMMUNICATION
COMMANDANT'S JETTY
TO REMARKABLE CAVE
OVERSEERS COTTAGE 1838
DAIRY 1868
SITE OF GOVERNMENT FARM 1854
FOUNTAIN
SENTRY BOX
NUBEENA ROAD
TO NUBEENA
TASMAN HIGHWAY
TO THE CRAFT SHOP
CAFE
PARKING, TICKET OFFICE AND TOILETS
CHAPEL STREET
POND
MOTEL
FOUNTAIN 1847
TO YOUTH HOSTEL
SCORPION ROCK SCENIC LOOKOUT
TO PENNANT HILL
KING STREET
FORESTIER PENINSULA
TASMAN PENINSULA
HISTORICAL RUINS - LOCATION OF DEMOLISHED BUILDINGS SHOWN IN DOTTED LINES.
BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES ERECTED AFTER THE CLOSURE OF THE SETTLEMENT

The Port Arthur transport *Tamar*

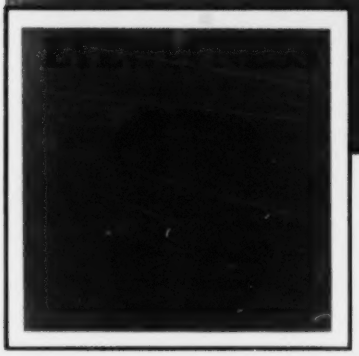
Martin Cash, 1842

I was now called out [from the Hobart Town prisoners' barracks], together with fourteen or fifteen others, the whole being placed in heavy irons previous to our embarkation on board the *Tamar* brig, where before long we found ourselves stowed away in the hold, our only bedding being the stones which she carried as ballast. The hatches were immediately secured, leaving us in total darkness; and in this situation we remained until eight o'clock on the following morning, when we dropped anchor at Port Arthur.



LOOKING FURTHER: Background 1 and **Background 2** supply information about the transportation system. **Profiles 7** and **11** continue the stories of Martin Cash and William Derricourt. **Eyewitness 15** tells of the procedure followed when convicts disembarked at Port Arthur. Miller's life is outlined in **Profile 14**.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



Murder

Murder was not a common crime at Port Arthur, but it certainly occurred more often than authorities would have liked. Sometimes it was a thoughtless act of passion; at other times it occurred during a brawl—perhaps between fellow-absconders. (In such cases, food always being in desperately short supply, cannibalism might occur, but this was probably very rare.) Another motive for murder was the simple desire to let the hangman's noose put an end to all the misery.

An atrocious murder

David Burn, a visitor, 1842

From the factories we walked to the scene of a recent atrocious, motiveless murder. It is about three-quarters of a mile from the settlement, in a lonely, gloomy dell—some of the neighbouring trees are still splashed with the victim's blood . . . it appears that the murderer, **Belfield**, a lad of eighteen, and **Boardman**, a lad of seventeen were at work in the vicinity . . . Both were seen to leave the gang (to quench their thirst at a creek), but Belfield alone returned; and, when questioned by the overseer of his comrade, he declared he had 'bolted', pointing in the opposite direction . . . A couple of days elapsed, when a man cutting brooms thought he heard groans, which as he approached grew more distinct, until, at the foot of a gigantic gum tree, clotted with gore and fly-blown, he beheld the hapless sufferer. Shouting for aid and hastening to the creek, he washed the vermin from the mouth of the mangled creature, who was so disfigured as to be unknown by his comrade . . . [At the hospital, see Background 10 and Eyewitness 13] he sufficiently recovered to identify his assassin . . . Boardman lingered until January 2, and Belfield is now in the Hobart Town Gaol.

THE DEATH OF GEORGE SHUTTLEWORTH.

One Thursday 30th May 1835 two men Henry Riley and George Shuttleworth were digging out the foundations for the new Church that was to be built in Port Arthur. While they were digging they were having an arguement over where they would dig next. When suddenly Henry went over to George and flung his pick onto his head. George instantly dropped dead.

When the Soldiers and other Convicts went over to where Henry and George were working, they saw George lying in one of the ditches dead. They saw blood on the end of the pick where Henry had hit George. Henry Riley was no where to be sighted. They started a majo[illegible]search to find him. They looked in caves, hollow logs, ditches, and any other places where Riley would be likely to be hiding, but he was still no where to be found.

After a few months they had to give up and go back to the settlement because ther was no where he could get away. But after about 12 months Riley decided to give up and go back to the settlement because of that reason.

When the Soldiers had found out that Riley had given up they told him that he was to be hung for murdering George Shuttleworth. But Riley didn't care any more. He couldn't be bothered escaping or even caring about his own life.

LANA

14

Tired of life

William Derricourt, 1841

For attempting to abscond Derricourt was sentenced to twelve months in irons, and put to work breaking stones while chained to a cable. At the cable one of my neighbours was a man named Travis (or **Travers**), who suffered much through his stubborn and obstinate nature. One day Travis said to me, 'What's a man's life worth tied up like this . . .? My life is only a misery to me, and I would rather shorten it. I don't care what means I take, or who it is I pitch on. That man wheeling over the heaps of stones always brings me the largest and hardest of the lot. I'll either knock his brains out, or the overseer tyrant's, or do for someone. As you are next me, you'll be brought up as a witness, and it would be doing you a good turn. You'll get a quieter life in Hobart, away from this . . .' *Derricourt then pretended to be ill and was taken off the cable.* While I was lying in my cell the keeper told me that Travis had smashed some man's skull, as he had threatened to do . . .

*Note: Derricourt's recollection is hazy: in fact, Travis (or **Travers**, see Profile 1) was the man who was murdered, and his attacker was Patrick Minehan or **Minahan**.*

A convict cannibal?—Journal entries

Journal of Captain Booth

21 September 1837—received a signal two Prisoners had absconded from Settlement. 28 September—signal received that one of the Prisoners had been apprehended—the other stated to be drowned . . . Prisoner . . . announced to have arrived in an exhausted state, but from his having a quantity of meat in his possession—half boiled and half roasted . . . together with a curious account looks rather suspicious. 29 September—The rascal gives so very vague an account of the Flesh that the suspicion already formed appears to strengthen . . .

Journal of Thomas Lempriere

29 September—Two absentees [William Cripps and Reid] turned up yesterday—Cripps was taken and said Reid was drowned on Sunday—he was reaching some muttonfish off the rock, fell in & was drowned—a dreadful suspicion hangs over Cripps—he had some meat of a suspicious appearance about him—could he have killed & eaten his companion? 30 September—Examined the meat that Cripps had with the Doctor; it looks like human besides there were some human hairs with it . . . 5 October—the meat found on Cripps has been sent to town and pronounced to be like human flesh. 14 October—Commandant has been very busy in investigation about Cripps—There appears no doubt that he ate part of his companion.

Journal of Captain Booth

14 October—[Cripps] fully committed for murder . . . 22 October—A letter from MacDowall [Attorney-General in Hobart Town]—Cripps not to be tried—Evidence not sufficient.

LOOKING FURTHER: Background 5 and **Eyewitness 5** describe other aspects of punishment for crimes or offences. **Profile 8** and **Profile 25** tell of the careers of Boardman and Belfield, and **Profiles 1** and **29** are about Travers and Minahan. Derricourt's life is outlined in **Profile 11**, Booth's in **Profile 31** and Lempriere's in **Profile 3**.

EYEWITNESS 4

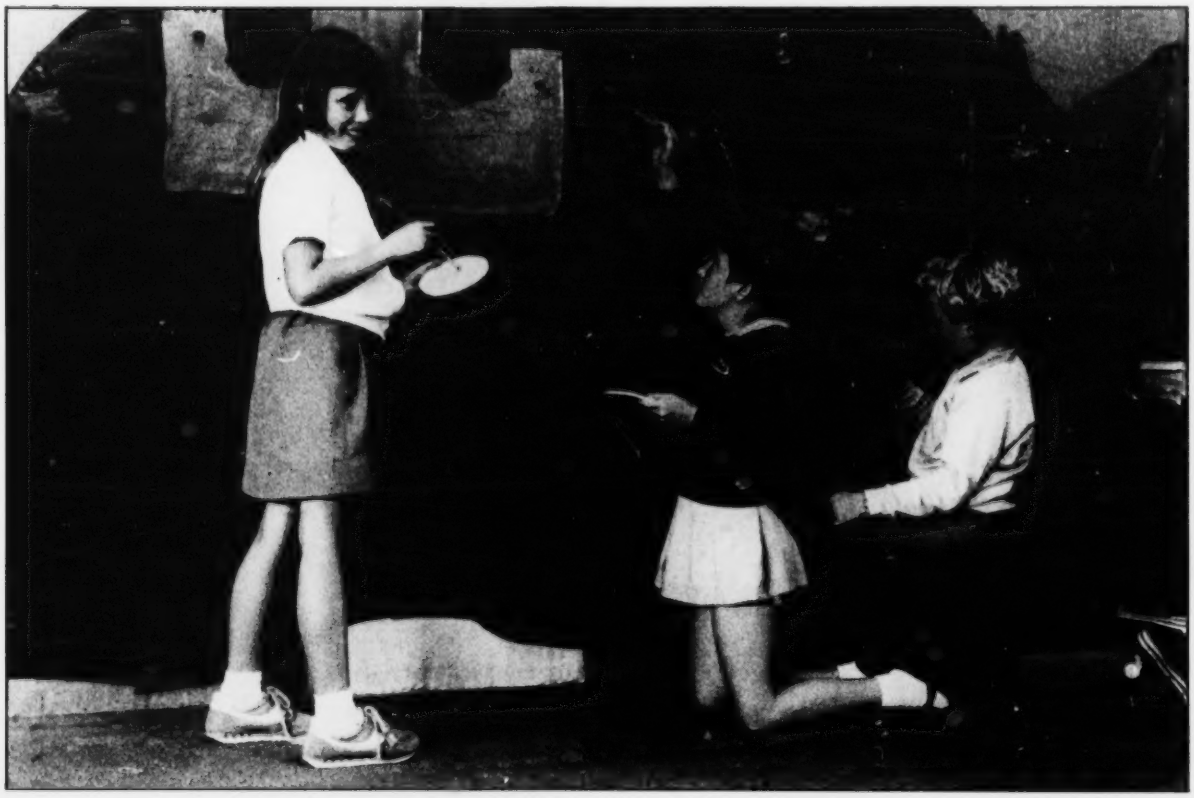
General descriptions

James Ross, writer, 1836

Port Arthur in 1836

The most prominent objects [on arrival by sea] are the signal station [see Eyewitness 14] erected on the stump of a lofty stupendous tree on the summit of a little eminence, the guardhouse and turret with a platform commanding the settlement, the stores, blacksmiths' and shoemakers' workshops, and at the top of the cove the church not yet finished . . . The little footpath terraces one above another on the bank were the first things that attracted my attention. For nothing but human labour being permitted on the settlement there was no occasion for carriage roads. A small three-wheeled cart indeed, driven by as many men, was seen carrying up fire-wood and water to the houses of the several officers of the establishment, but beyond this no other means was used . . . but mens' shoulders . . .

As we pursued our walk, I was much struck with the silence and indescribable air of seriousness that pervaded the settlement. The neat and snug looking white washed cottages, the smiling verdure of the shrubs and trees, the music of the pebbly shore, the shadows of the neighbouring hills . . . all the varied hue that nature in her smiling beauty presents, seemed able to convey none of its



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

cheerfulness to the hearts of the great mass of prisoners . . . The saddening aspect of the settlement . . . was wholly unrelieved by any appearance of shops, or business of any kind beyond the performance of the allotted tasks of each. No signs, or allurements to buy, as in other villages, were to be seen . . .

. . . The night was dark and wet, and we did not observe the sentry [at the prisoners' barracks, see Background 3] until he had challenged us. The sergeant of the guard unlocked the gate and admitted us. The barracks were temporary buildings composed of logs and, for the most part, covered with bark, and a new and permanent structure had been commenced only a few weeks previous[ly] . . . At one time we were up to the ankles in mud . . . A lane or passage extends on all sides round the barracks, and a lamp being placed at each corner the soldiers who walk along see every person who moves out of his quarters . . . A solemn silence pervaded the whole, interrupted only by the solitary tread of the sentinels. From thirty to forty prisoners slept in each apartment, arranged in two stories one above the other . . . A lamp was constantly kept burning in each apartment . . .

A visitor in the 1840s

Rev. Robert Crooke in the early 1840s

The first illusion of Port Arthur is that of a pretty village, but this is quickly dispelled by the sound of irons clanking and the sight of yellow and piebald dress. Lofty strong prisons and armed sentries give the place the appearance of a regular fortress.

An 1846 visit to the gardens

An anonymous visitor in 1846

The church [see Background 3] is handsomely built of stone, with a tower and a spire; it is calculated to hold 1200 persons on the ground-floor. There are also quarters for all the officers, civil and military, and various other edifices. A beautiful avenue of trees leads to the church, near to which are the hop grounds, covering an area of about six acres. This piece of land has been most tastefully laid out by Mr Champ, the commandant; it is intersected with broad walks, lined on each side with flower borders, in which the native plants, as well as exotics, are cultivated. In the centre of the main walk a fountain, with a jet of several feet, throws up continually a shower of water . . . Rustic benches are placed in the different walks. There is also a summer house at the highest part of the ground, from which a view of the settlement and harbour is obtained; this place is a favourite resort for the officers and their families . . .

People and buildings, late 1840s

Rev. H.P. Fry, visitor, late 1840s

Seventeen men were at work in the blacksmith's shop, which is about eighty feet long by thirty broad [24m by 9m], and is furnished with all necessary implements. The furnace is capable of casting five tons weight of iron in one piece . . . Six forges were in full operation . . . .

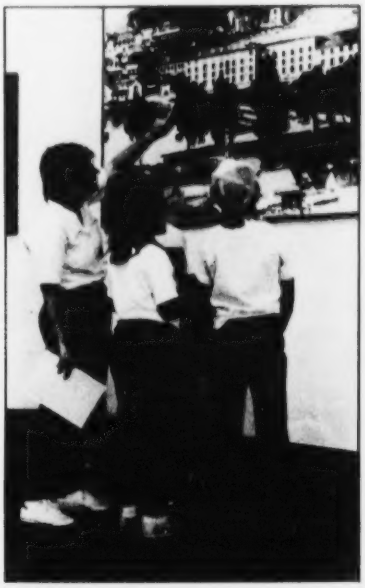
Forty-nine men were employed at shoemaking in a shop eighty feet long by thirty feet broad . . . Twenty-six carpenters were at work in a large shop, making various articles . . .

17

Nineteen gangs of from six to thirty men in each are at various works about the station . . .

The cook and bake-houses are large, and well supplied with ovens and boilers; eight convicts are employed as cooks, four as bakers . . . Five men wash for the whole station in a large wash-house forty feet by thirty feet [12m by 9m].

The church is a handsome building externally, in the shape of a cross; the interior is dirty, damp and mildewed. It is 150 feet long by seventy feet broad at the transept [45m by 21m], with a lofty spire. There are benches for 1000 men, and pews for 200 officers or soldiers . . .

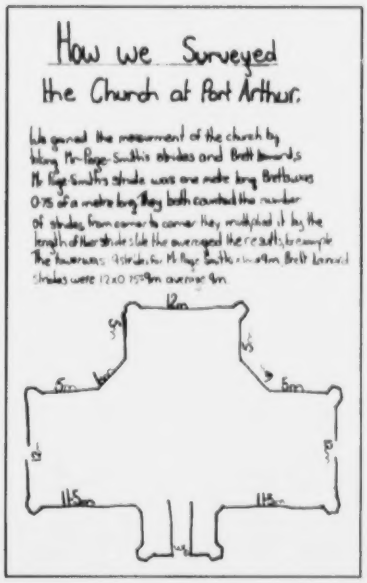


The school room is seventy feet long by twenty-eight feet broad [21m by 8.4m]; it is used also as a chapel by the Roman Catholic minister . . . After muster, at a quarter to seven o'clock, the men who are so disposed attend school, the remainder go to their huts to sleep . . .

The hospital [see Background 10, Eyewitness 13, and Profile 24] has four wards with about eighteen beds in each and several small rooms. There were fifty-three patients in hospital . . .

Eighty-one men sleep in solitary cells, forty servants sleep in their masters' quarters, thirty-six sleep in hospital, the remainder sleep in huts, of which there are twenty-three, containing 720 berths (altogether) . . . The berths in the huts are in two rows, one over the other, each berth is about twenty inches wide [50cm], and is separated from the adjoining berth by a board placed on its edge, which rises four or five inches [12cm] above the bed clothes. The doors have holes for inspection . . .

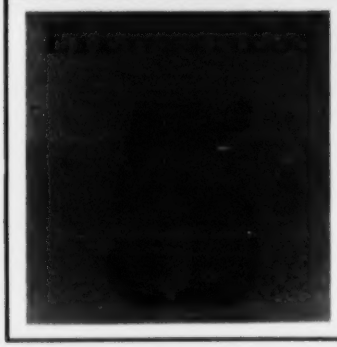
There were fourteen men in solitary confinement in punishment cells, very confined, and of imperfect construction.



LOOKING FURTHER: Backgrounds 3, 7 and **9** provide further general information about Port Arthur; also **Eyewitness 6**.

18

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



Punishment and reform

Men changed into monsters

Rev. H.P. Fry, visitor, late 1840s

There were fourteen men in solitary confinement in punishment cells, very confined and of imperfect construction. Several of the men had been three or four months in solitary confinement on half rations; their aspect was very pitiable; two of them could not be allowed out of their cells, as they declared that they would commit a murder on the first opportunity. They confessed this intention to myself. Such an example of men changed into monsters was seldom to be seen, and yet they were objects of the deepest pity, being victims of a combined unmitigated evil influence which humanity could not resist. Who can tell what compulsory pollution, what engrossing vice they may have endured, beholding all that is execrable, breathing air tainted with corruption and surrounded with fiends whose delight it is to drag all near them into the same abyss of wickedness? Is it wonderful that men who have gone through years of such contagious association should abhor themselves, and every creature of their own species, and be impelled by the darkest despair to seek revenge and self-extinction in murder?

There is not one building at Port Arthur inhabited by convicts, which is built of brick or of stone; all the huts are weather-boarded, close, decayed, and incapable of being fitted up with proper berths divided by partitions . . . The tower of the church has as much stone in it as would build a dormitory for all the men . . . As if to exhibit the excess of disregard for the convicts, although there is a barrack [already] for the soldiers . . . quite sufficient for [their] accommodation . . . within the last twelve months, a new and ornamental military barrack of cut stone has been erected . . . The amount of work expended upon this barrack, in the opinion of a competent judge, would have erected substantial stone dormitories for all the prisoners . . .

A just system?

James Ross, writer, 1836

The sufferings of the wretched men who commit these horrid murders that their own death may ensue, are the consequences of their own wickedness. The punishment at Port Arthur is of a negative kind. It consists chiefly of the deprivation which the prisoner suffers, in the discomfort he endures from the entire stop that is put to indulgence in all his former vicious and dissipated habits. The mind being diseased, and as it were brutalised, becomes insensible to the true enjoyments of life, those only that are pure, innocent, and holy . . . Sunk so deep in the darkness of crime, he dares not, and will not, lift his heart to heaven and repentance . . . The demon . . . urges him on . . . That misery of the deepest kind exists at Port Arthur I think no one will dispute. But it is a misery which has its seat and origin in the breasts of the men themselves, not in the discipline to which they are subjected, nor in the authorities who dispense it.

A slip to the bottom of the ladder

An elderly convict with an early record of petty theft, but well behaved for some time was given a position of trust in charge of the vegetable garden.

James Ross, 1836

I am sorry to say, that before I left the settlement I had the pain to see this wretched unhappy old man in chains at the bottom of the ladder of reform, he having been found guilty of making away with a basket full of potatoes. So difficult is it to correct a bad habit when it has once been indulged in.

A system of reward and punishment

James Ross, 1836

The great moving principle on which the success and security of the settlement depends, is the carrying of the system of rewards and punishments to its utmost limits and perfection. While on the one hand, good, steady and repentant conduct is sure to be appreciated by encouragement, the slightest variation from the laws and regulations . . . is never overlooked . . . Thus from the severe labour in the woods . . . the deserving prisoner is removed to a labour of less severity . . . until he is ultimately promoted to some place of trust, as at a signal station or a boat's crew or finally to that of a watchman or constable . . . while on the other hand transgression is liable to precipitate him to the bottom. An inferior ration, solitary confinement, working at the coal mines, chains, and flogging, are some of the steps down . . . the re-ascent is so difficult.

A merry lot get their deserts—journal entry

Journal of Captain Booth

10 January 1834—*Tamar* [convict transport] signalized—found on board . . . 21 adults and 68 urchins—on the way down the latter evinced their dexterity by foraging out in the Hold of the Vessel a six dozen Case of Wine for me, had abstracted all but one Bottle—some of which they had handed in to the Adults—the consequences a scene of general intoxication—some of the Boys and Men brutal—landed all Men that were drunk and placed them in quod [cells]—rather disgusted . . . 11 January 1834—Recovered a dozen of my fluid—poked into various corners—Hauled the Bacchanalians (the Men) over the Coals at the 'Bar'—gave the leader half a hundred (lashes) and the remainder three dozen each—in the afternoon landed the Boys at their appointed station [Point Puer], and gave them over to the Superintendence of Mr Montgomery . . . read them a lecture—reprimanded the Miscreants who took the liberty with my case of vinous 'Fluid'—the mode adopted by the Government in withdrawing these little Urchins from bad company and example will without any doubt, if proper attention is paid to their Morals be the means of bringing many—if not all—into the right path again.

No fault overlooked

David Burn, writer, 1842

The discipline is, of necessity, rigidly severe; not a fault—no, not the most trivial is overlooked; the most anxious, the most searching enquiry ever precedes punishment, and the offender is made to feel that its infliction proceeds from no arbitrary capricious tyranny, but is the inevitable and well known reward of his own malpractices. The convicts are distributed as much as possible to various classified

gangs . . . Men are removed from the more laborious gangs according as their behaviour is good, or their sentence expires. All newcomers sleep in silent apartments (a sore punishment). . . The carrying gang is deemed the most severe . . . The chain gangs are employed in carting stone, firewood or drawing water for general use. The most habitual absconders . . . are not only put in irons, but fastened to a chain, where they are made to break stones under the eye of every passer-by [see Profile 29] . . . Every week there is a muster for medical inspection. They strip to the waist . . .

A jelly of flesh and blood

Linus Miller, convict, 1840

The scenes enacted at the triangles were most revolting. Two dozen lashes, which was considered a light sentence, always left the victim's back a complete jelly of bruised flesh and congealed blood. A pool of blood and pieces of flesh are no uncommon sight at the triangles after a dozen have been flogged . . . [Some would cry] 'Murder' or 'Oh my God' . . . loud enough to have been heard a mile, while others of more nerve would clench their teeth, and endure all without even a groan. Some idea of this inhuman punishment may be formed from the fact that the sound of the blows . . . may be heard at the distance of one hundred rods [about 500 metres]. Many faint while undergoing the torture, and some are carried from the triangles to the hospital, where they pine away and die.

A diary in a week of a convicts life

I woke one morning feeling cold, so I put my shirt on hoping a gaurd would not catch me with it on. I also pulled my bed back from in front of the doorway because there was a draught coming under the door, suddenly the bell rung that ment it was time to get up and have breakfast. It also ment the soldiers were going to come around the cells and check on us, luckily for me they started at the other end of the medel prison which would give me time to take my shirt off and move my bed back into place. But a gaurd must have heard me move the bed and came in and seized me by the arm which made me jump. I was sentanced to a week of solitary confinment with bread and water. After one day I started to fell cold and lonely, it was very dark and I felt scared and I yelled as loud as I could. They came and got me and gave me fifty lashes then threw me back into solitary confinment for 6 more days. I didnt make any more noise and they let me out before my week was up but knowing me I wasnt out for two days and they put me back in again for trying to escape.

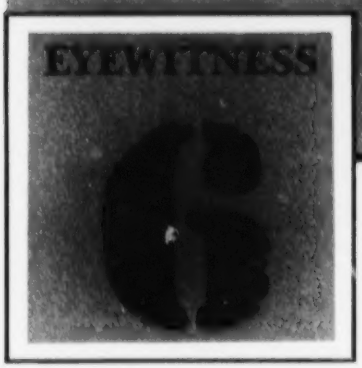
Hardening the mind

James Backhouse and George Washington Walker, Quaker missionaries, 1834

The infliction of corporal punishment before the assembled Prisoners, who are generally all mustered on these occasions, appears to us calculated to harden their minds . . . and also to be attended with some risk . . . a designing man of desperate character . . . would not find much difficulty in throwing the Settlement into a state of insubordination, in spite of the Military Guard; the Prisoners present at these times being between six and seven hundred and the Guard but forty in number.

LOOKING FURTHER: Backgrounds 4, 5 and **6** tell of the administration's approach toward managing the convicts and guiding their reform. **Eyewitness 14** describes incidents relating to discipline. Linus Miller is the subject of **Profile 14**.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



Industry at Port Arthur

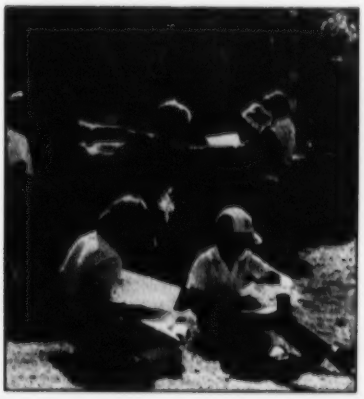
Men at work

Rev. Henry Fry, visitor, late 1840s

Thirty-nine men were employed digging at agricultural labour, twenty-five in four boats, under charge of two free and two convict overseers . . . Seventeen men were at work in the blacksmith's shop, which is about eighty feet long by thirty broad (24m by 9m), and furnished with all necessary implements. The furnace is capable of casting five tons weight of iron in one piece, and brass frames of one cwt [hundredweight—one-twentieth of a ton]. The peal of bells for the church were cast here. Six forges were in full operation . . . Iron work for all the government buildings and probation stations is wrought here . . . Forty-nine men were employed at shoemaking . . . Shoes are made for the officers, military, and men at Port Arthur and other stations . . . Twenty-six carpenters were at work in a large shop, making various articles, and house-work [building and fitting out houses] for the station.

Working boys

David Burn, writer, 1842



We next morning paid a visit to the various workshops [at Point Puer]. In this admirable establishment between 600 and 700 boys are taught the means of obtaining an honest livelihood . . . After a term of good conduct [clearing and cultivating land] the option of trade is conceded . . . The juvenile sawyers first attracted our notice; of these there are from fifteen to twenty pairs. At present they work in open pits, but sheds are in progress to shelter them from the weather. These lads not only cut sufficient timber for their own buildings, but furnish considerable supplies to the other work. The boat-builders department . . . comes next under review. There a beautiful whale-boat of Huon pine . . . was rapidly attaining completion. At the cooperage, tubs, buckets, mess kits, and ship buoys were in progress of manufacture. About fifty tailors actively cut out and make up clothing, while there are seventy-five shoemakers equally assiduous in their vocation. Every scrap of old iron is turned to account in the blacksmith's shop, where the boys were converting fragments of hoops into nails, rivets and the like. At the carpenter's shop they were framing doors and window sashes, and preparing boards. The bookbinders were in full employ, having several of [the Rev.] **Mr Manton's** volumes in hand . . . The stonemasons were next visited. They have a great variety of material prepared and preparing for the purpose of erecting a large and substantial barrack . . .

LOOKING FURTHER: Background 7 provides general information on industrial activity. **Eyewitness 11** and **Eyewitness 12** are about specific aspects of industry. Manton's life is outlined in **Profile 20**.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EYEWITNESS

7

Contact between convict and free

With only one exception, contact between convict and non-convict people at Port Arthur was allowed only in the course of official business; wives or children of officers were not allowed to communicate in any way with convicts, and vice versa. The exception was in the case of convicts assigned as domestic servants; it was through such people that the women of Port Arthur learned most about what it was to be a convict. Of the following extracts, the first two are from reminiscences in old age of Jemima Frances Irvine, daughter of writer David Burn and wife of a civil officer stationed at Port Arthur in the late 1840s.

Secret charity

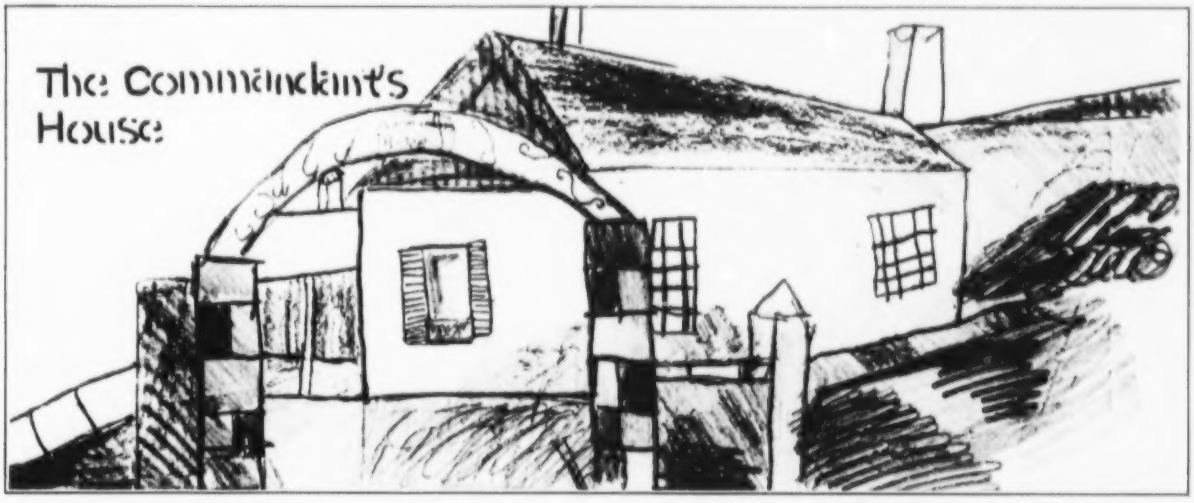
Mrs Irvine, late 1840s

Sometimes when tobacco supplies were short [for the prisoners were not officially allowed to smoke or chew it], I used to hide some of the twists or plugs of it in the pocket of my dress or in my handbag. Then as I passed them at work on the roads or in the garden, I would accidentally let a plug fall near them on to the ground. They never showed even by the flicker of an eyelid that they had seen me do this, for we should both have got into trouble if it had been discovered, but the tobacco used to disappear like magic.

Servants

Mrs Irvine

We used to have them as servants and some of them had worked in the best houses in England. You can have no idea what good work they used to do and how much we came to like some of them. They were not the depraved, nearly maniac creatures you may have read about, at all. Some of them had been sent out for trifles, and never broke the law again.



The worse for drink

Journal of Thomas Lempriere, 20 May 1834

At 7PM we sat down to an excellent dinner. The party consisted of Mr and Mrs **Manton**, Capt and Miss Spotswood, Capt **Booth**, Macgregor, Casey, Mr Turner, **Charlotte** and myself [**Lempriere**], the only annoyance experienced was that Mrs Manton's female Servant as well as ours took much to the rosy God.

LOOKING FURTHER: Background 9 and **Eyewitness 16** tell of the lives of non-convict people at Port Arthur. **Profiles 3 and 16** include a convict's comments on free officials. Many other profiles contain opinions by free people about convicts, or vice versa, and **Profile 28** is about the Lempriere's female servant. Rev. Manton is the subject of **Profile 20**, Thomas Lempriere of **Profile 3**, Charlotte Lempriere of **Profile 23** and Capt. Booth of **Profile 31**.

Religion and morality

The path of virtue

C.P.T. Laplace, a French visitor, late 1830s

[Captain Booth told me:] 'I believe that there are, among these unfortunates, one or two who, if removed from the sphere of this destructive influence [of fellow-prisoners], might yet return to the path of virtue; because occasionally I perceive, in the depths of these corrupt souls, some spark of virtuous feeling which can be reanimated in a number of ways, but principally by recollections of their families and by religion.' It was chiefly to this second method, then, that the Superintendent of Port Arthur resorted in the hope of softening the savage characters of his dread charges so that the exasperation and despair of their hearts might give way to resignation and patience.

Seeds and blossoms

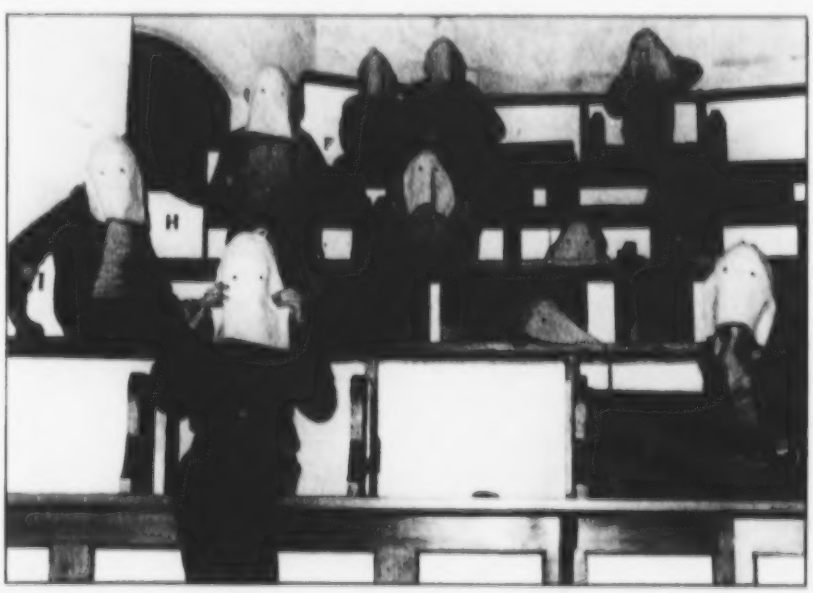
David Burn, writer, 1842

Port Arthur is a place of wonders. Where naught but sin and crime are assumed to exist, the seeds of religion and virtue have been carefully planted, and the blossoms of goodliness are seen to germinate. Even the yellow jacket may cover many a repentant and returning heart. As a kind of guiding star, a spiritual oasis in this moral desert, a Sabbath school has been instituted for the children of the officers, soldiers, overseers, and others.

The Sermon: two views

Laplace, late 1830s

Here [in the Church], as in the prison itself, the convicts were divided into three categories—the prisoners on trial or probation . . .



26 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

the criminals whose conduct was neither particularly good nor particularly bad; and finally, the incorrigible malefactors—and were drawn up in three tiers facing the altar and pulpit. The most profound silence, indeed almost a kind of meditation, continued throughout the long sermon preached by the minister before the singing of the hymns; during this discourse, while attending closely to the lessons in morality and resignation delivered by the preacher . . . I allowed my gaze to wander all around the sacred building.

Journal of Thomas Lempriere, 20 May 1834

Mr Turner [Rev. Nathaniel T.] preached here and at Point Puer on Sunday and at the Military Barracks yesterday. His sermons are good, but he does not know how to modulate his voice which however is powerful—on Sunday Evening he thundered till my Head ached nevertheless I hope I benefitted by the Sermon.

The power of sacred song

Laplace, late 1830s

[With the singing of hymns] a choir of voices arose, strong and full and tuneful . . . I was now so strongly affected that my eyes filled with tears. The indifference or boredom [on convicts' faces] had now given place to an expression of pleasure . . . The frowns of a few moments before had cleared at the first chords of the sacred music.

Worship at the point of a bayonet

In this account related by the Superintendent of Impression Bay Probation Station (Premaydena), his agreement that Catholics could worship separately from Protestants met with opposition from a catechist (a religious instructor) who complained to the visiting magistrate, a Major Mainwaring.

James Purslowe, 1843

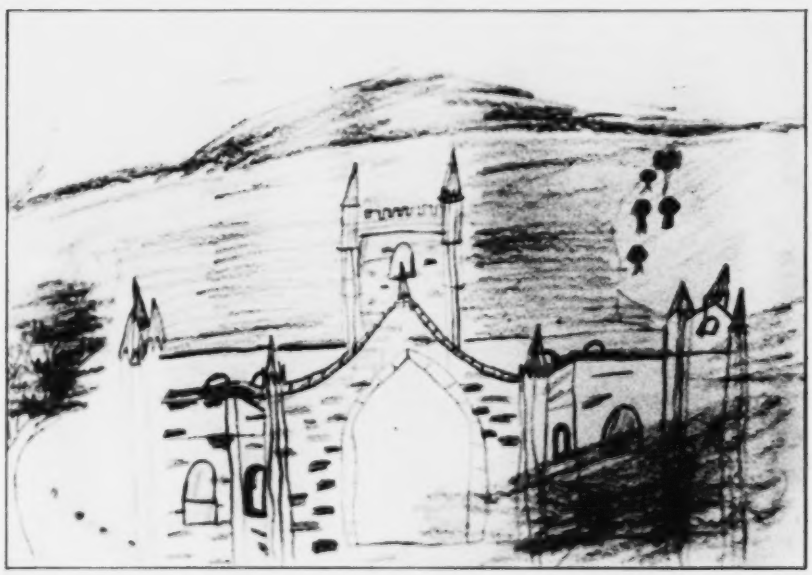
They came in company to the station, and ordered the office to be cleared; they then demanded my authority for allowing the Roman Catholics to absent themselves from the catechist's service. I could refer to no instructions, for none existed, but gave my experience in support of the exemption, and as superintendent of the station, claimed that authority . . . The visiting magistrate flew into a rage, and said, 'I forbid any such thing—in that very room the men shall all assemble for prayers.' I begged him to consider that the room . . . was only calculated to accommodate about 150, and the gang numbered 500. He didn't care, he replied, into that room they should go, or he would force them in at the point of a bayonet . . . . Sunday came—the gang assembled; I again interceded on behalf of the Catholics, but fruitlessly . . . The 500 men filed off to the mess-house [where the Catholics had previously worshipped while the Protestants met in the open air]; they were squeezed into the room with the greatest difficulty, and at the risk of suffocation, and when the last had been forced into the place the military with fixed bayonets jammed up the door. Every instant I expected to see the walls give way . . . Up to the time I left the [Convict] department . . . Protestant and Catholic were compelled to attend the one service or submit to punishment. Such a proceeding, I am aware, is opposed to the whole spirit of . . . despatches [from the Home Government].

A Catholic protest: the Governor's view

Excerpts from minutes of Executive Council, 1842, 1843

His Excellency informs the [Executive] Council that he has called the members together for the purpose of requesting their advice upon a matter of extreme importance in reference to the discipline and security of the penal establishment at Port Arthur; that upon his late tour of inspection in Tasman's Peninsula, Capt. **Booth** had informed him that '**Richard Jones**', a convict lately arrived from Ireland by the *Isabella Watson* had twice refused to attend on Sunday at the place of worship according to the standing orders of the establishment . . . [His Excellency] thought it right to inform the Council that the number and description of men now confined at Port Arthur were such as to cause him the most serious alarm . . . Many of the men now at Port Arthur were most desperate characters, particularly those who had lately arrived from New South Wales and from Ireland. [Commandant Booth's memorandum noted that Jones (Profile 33) had been punished twice with solitary confinement.]. . . His Excellency adds that he cannot but apprehend the greatest danger to human life if any relaxation in the regulations at Port Arthur is admitted, and that he had seen the Crown Law Officers who have no doubt whatever of the legality of the course pursued by Capt. Booth.

[Ten months later:] The Members will remember the case minute No. 161, 14th October 1842, of the convict 'Richard Jones' who on what he professed to be conscientious grounds refused to attend divine worship at the settlement. Jones was a Roman Catholic, and the gentleman who leads devotions is a Protestant minister . . . The members will perceive from Capt. Booth's statement that another case of a similar description has recently occurred where he is convinced conscientious scruples were not felt, but feigned . . . I have no doubt that [Joseph] 'Green' . . . [sought] to be exempted from attendance at the place of worship in a spirit of insubordination. The place and occasion chosen by him—namely when the convicts were arranged in ranks in the square before going to the place of worship, clearly evince this. He stepped out of the ranks evidently



28

with the view of making a demonstration. His air and manner made his intention manifest. He was peremptorily and on the instant asked to resume his place. Had not this been done it is probable that he would have been imitated by others. Captain Booth . . . [tends] to think that the Sydney convicts and particularly those originally from Ireland require to be watched with more than ordinary care. Very recently several of them were observed one day to wear a badge which they refused to part with unless 'Jones', the man who first refused to attend the place of worship, would do so.

Gunpowder in the Church

Detachment order, July 1838

Until further orders No. 3 Sentinel will be removed to the church, to be placed over a quantity of powder deposited in the tower of the church . . . no individual whatsoever (without authority of the **Commandant**) will be permitted therein; [the sentry] will be particular to see that the staircase door is locked; he will frequently go round the church to ascertain that no fire or light of any kind is near his post, and take into custody any person lurking thereabout; each time after going round he will ascertain that the lock of the staircase door is secure. On Sunday he will not interfere with the usual duties of the day but be particular vigilant to see to it there is no communication with the staircase.

Discrimination at Port Arthur

On arriving at the door of the church after marching up the hill for Sunday morning service, the order was given:

William Derricourt, convict, 1843

'Halt; Roman Catholics fall out.' The unfortunate Catholics were then obliged to stand in rank, were it sunshine or rain, until the end of the service . . . There was then no priest at Port Arthur.

A service at Hobart Town prisoners' barracks

Linus Miller, political prisoner, 1842

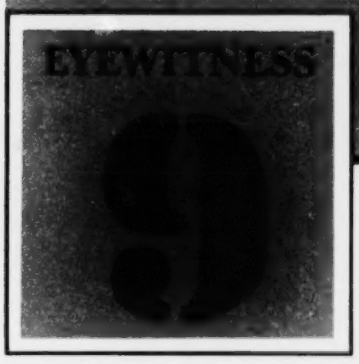
The clergyman read the service as if it were a disagreeable and disgusting task. The sermon was metaphysical, unrelated to real life, and he did not speak to the convicts directly nor look at them. It was a solemn mockery . . . too horrid to be endured. [The convicts likewise took no notice, playing at Pitch and Toss, gambling with cards, trading in candy, tobacco or rum.]

And at Point Puer

Thomas Lempriere, early 1840s

The Sabbath is passed in a strictly devout manner and at all times, profane, blasphemous and indecent language or conduct is checked and punished.

LOOKING FURTHER: Background 6 provides general information. **Profiles 20** and **33** are essentially about religious matters, while **Profile 6** tells of an administrator's problems over religion. **Profiles 24** and **26** touch on religion. Lempriere's story is told in **Profile 3**, Derricourt's in **Profile 11**, Miller's in **Profile 14** and Booth's in **Profile 31**.



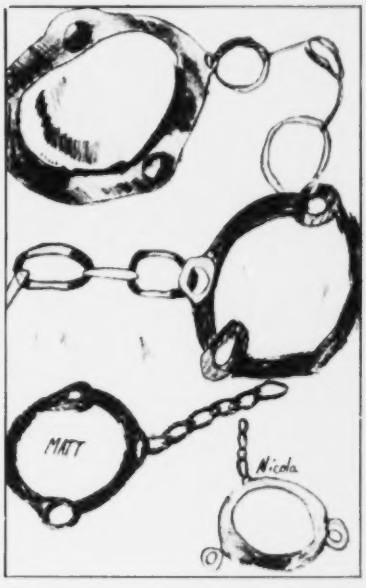
Escape

Making plans

Martin Cash, 1842

On arrival at Port Arthur the convicts were addressed by the Commandant, ***Captain Booth****.*

He concluded . . . by observing that there was but one gate leading from the peninsula, the key of which remained in his pocket . . . [He] spoke in metaphor—the key . . . being nothing more or less than his permission to leave Port Arthur . . .



William Derricourt, convict, early 1840s

. . . during my time at Port Arthur I continued to make observations in order to facilitate my escape. I kept my thoughts and intentions however to myself, it being an everyday occurrence for one prisoner to turn around upon another and inform the authorities . . . I was on one occasion selected, with two others, to carry rations to a party of soldiers stationed at Mount Arthur, from the summit of which the whole peninsula can be scanned with the naked eye. This I considered a fortunate circumstance, as it would give me an opportunity of marking the situation of Eaglehawk Neck, the point at which I intended to effect my escape. On arriving at the summit of Mount Arthur we were permitted to rest for an hour, during which time I took in the whole line of country. I wanted more particularly to mark out the position of Eaglehawk and East Bay Necks, and, enquiring in a careless manner, had them both pointed out to me by my companions, who were old hands.

On making myself acquainted with all these particulars, I concluded that the facsimile of O'Hara Booth's key was now in my possession and it only remained for me to make use of it.

An unsuccessful escape

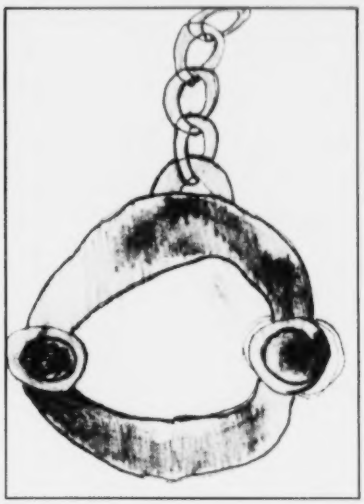
Crushed down, worked like a beast of burden, and oppressed more than human nature could endure, I made up my mind to 'bush it' again. One day, being at Tunketyboo (Tongataboo, now called Mt Tonga) . . . two or three miles distant from the settlement . . . gave the keepers the slip. Having nothing to eat, I wandered about in the bush, and at last took shelter in a hollow log. All round were the signal stations. In the event of a convict having broken loose, the arms of the semaphores notified his number for miles and miles around. As I lay in sight of a semaphore [see Eyewitness 14], I could see my own number go up, and I had to act with caution. Next day at dawn I crept down to the beach and got a supply of winkles and limpets, and fortunately found a good-sized muttonfish. I had to eat my fish raw, as I dare not make a smoke, and had no charcoal, with which smokeless fuel 'bolters' often provided themselves. In this way two days passed without discovery. To make my tracks to and from the beach so that they could not be recognised I fastened stones securely on the soles of my boots. After two days I made for [Eaglehawk Neck] . . . I waited till night, and then quietly stole into

the water and moved noiselessly along with my nose and mouth just above the surface. The more surely to escape the vigilance of the sentries stationed on the narrow neck of land, and of the number of ferocious dogs chained to kennels on stages in the water, I surrounded my head with a large bunch of seaweed. When about half-way along the neck a swell in the water swept off my seaweed and showed me to the dogs, which immediately set up a furious barking, and aroused the sentinel on shore. On the instant came the report of a gun, and a bullet pinged into the water, barely missing my head. I at once dived; but on coming up again I heard the challenge: 'Now, youngster, if you attempt to escape, I'll soon put you past diving. Come on out.' I surrendered, and was taken to the guardhouse, and placed in the guardroom . . . As I was wringing wet [the sentry] found me some old soldier's clothes, and brought me a canteen of tea, and also some pea soup, pork and bread, saying 'Put this into you; you'll find it better than the salt water.' When he had seen my ravenous hunger he said he would not give me a second supply then, as it might be bad for me. But in the morning he returned my clothes dried, and gave me some more bread and meat, and a canteen of tea enough for two or three days. I was then taken back to the settlement by two armed guards . . . I was thrust into a cell for the night, to be the next day brought before the Commandant, Captain O'Hara Booth [see Profile 31], and, of course, punished . . . . The commandant said, 'As you are quite a young man, I will give you another chance. I do not wish to put you under the lash as I would do an old hand [who had not taken chances to better himself] and who would have to undergo a hundred lashes. Such a punishment might be the means of ruining your constitution. The sentence I pass upon you is that you shall work for twelve months in irons at the chain, and at night be kept in solitary confinement.'

An early break-out

Journal of Captain Booth

25 Mar 1835—At daylight this morning found that four of celebrity had cut their way out of the Gaol—took a Boat from the Dock-yard which swamped with them—afterwards O'Mara [sentry] fell in with **Stephens**, one of the party of Runaways who knocked him down with a sledge hammer, a scuffle ensued, little O'Mara at last made him pay for it and in a most manly manner made him Prisoner without firing on him—immediately on the information being given I made off with Jack and reached the Neck in an hour & a half—on return tried the whole of the fellows who were in the Gaol at the time the Men broke out—thirty in a lump—28 Mar 1835 This day about noon heard a Shot—soon after three of the Prisoners hove in sight in charge of the Soldiers and Constables—taken near Sympathy Point—Serjeant Murphy was necessitated to bring Howard with a Shot which passed through his left Arm and passed out at the breast breaking the bone of the Arm high up—the other wound simply flesh but a close shave—Casey (medical officer) considered on examination that amputation was indispensible [see Background 10] . . . I was present during the amputation of the Arm—after the wound was dressed and the patient put to bed he expressed to me a wish of seeing me tomorrow. 29 Mar 1835—Agreeably to Howard's desire visited him, when he professed great regret at past mis-conduct and fervently declared to reform—afterwards he acknowledged to me the manner in which he and Mitford had escaped (through the Surf) and also Williams and



Mathews (via Sloping Island) and gave also information of others about to start—I feel little doubt that this lesson will be the means of retrieving Howard . . .

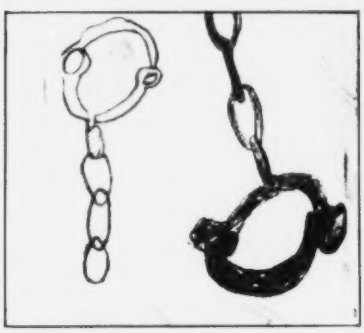
From Booth's report to Colonial Secretary, 28 March 1835:

Absconders **Edward Howard**, Joseph Dyke, John Mitford, **Benjamin Stephens**, Robert Williamson: By the statement of Serjeant Murphy I feel no doubt that no other means [than shooting] could have been adopted to avert the prisoner's . . . escape from him, though the prisoner's affidavit asserts exactly the reverse . . . [Most of the absconders were] determined characters—'Benjamin Stephens' the first who was apprehended [yesterday] made a desperate effort on the life of one of the Military, by striking him on the head with a Hammer—the soldier acted in a most manly manner on the occasion in not making use of Arms . . . On no occasion are extreme measures adopted unless peremptorily called for.

A watery end

David Burn, writer, 1842

The attempts to escape by boats, canoes and catamarans are frequent . . . Upon one such occasion [the Commandant's] own crew made off with his boat . . . Upon another occasion a singular device was had recourse to. This was a sort of packing case, about 8ft or 9ft in length, 2½ft broad and 9in deep [2.5m by 75cm by 22cm]. It was closed in and caulked both above and below, consequently rendered air-tight. A couple of light spars were lashed across either end, and at their extremities pieces of wood . . . were secured. Every precaution had been taken to guard the two fugitives against the possibility of upsetting. Unhappily, however, [the vessel capsized] . . . and the washing ashore of two corpses, together with the crazy fabric, gave too clear an indication of the manner in which way they had met their doom. We also saw several coracles [a coracle is a small wickerwork boat covered with watertight material], the framework of wattle boughs, the covering [to serve for planking] of cotton shirts. To what desperate expedients will not men resort for liberty!

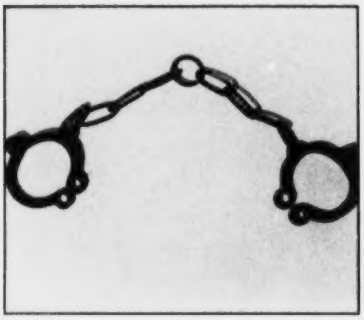


Success—Martin Cash's escape

Martin Cash, 1842, as told to James Lester Burke

I was next employed in carting stone from the quarry . . . We were permitted to converse with each other, and I here became acquainted with [Lawrence] Kavanagh and [George] Jones, both of whom had been transported for life from Sydney, for being under arms in the bush . . . [After some conversation, Jones] abruptly enquired if I intended to abscond. I looked at him for a moment and answered yes . . . *The three then made plans to abscond on Boxing Day, with food supplied by Joshua Roberts, cook to* ***Thomas Lempriere****.*

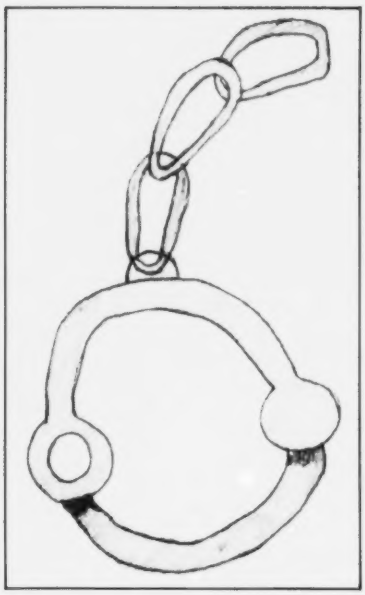
The following day [Boxing Day], on the gang repairing to the quarry, I anxiously cast my eyes in the direction of my two friends, from whom I did not receive the slightest token of recognition. Not knowing what to make of this, [I walked towards them and fixed my eyes on them]; they both instantly dropped their picks, and, springing on a steep bank, were lost in a minute in the scrub. I soon followed their example. Kavanagh took the lead as he knew the best where to find the swag which contained a quartern loaf [standard-sized loaf of bread] and seven pounds of flour. We had scarcely



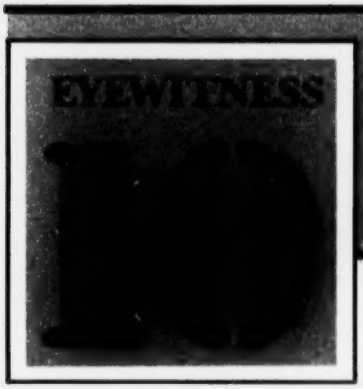
advanced a hundred yards when the whole settlement appeared in commotion, constables and other officials rushing in all directions; prisoners, also, who had completed a certain period of their respective sentences were pressed into the service, with a promise of ticket-of-leave should they succeed in capturing us . . . and the signals staff [were] also kept in full play. It being my turn to take the lead, I made direct to the foot of Mount Arthur, as I did not think it safe to cross any of the thoroughfares [roads] on that day. I therefore proposed that we should halt for the present, being then in the centre of an almost impervious scrub, where we could remain in perfect security.

I . . . came to the conclusion that the whole civil and military force would be concentrated on the Neck and along the coast as far as the Coal Mines, and therefore resolved that we should remain where we were for the next three days, being of opinion by that time they would relax in their vigilance, under the impression that we had made our escape . . . We then placed ourselves on a certain allowance of bread . . .

On the night of the third day we left our hiding place and, keeping to the most impassable part of the bush, came out at the head of Long Bay, when we crossed the road, and again striking the bush got to the other side of Signal Hill. The night was very dark, and owing to the nature of the country through which we travelled our clothing was literally torn to shreds. We halted here [and slept] . . . At the break of day . . . I made a damper . . . and lighting a charcoal fire in a hollow tree, in a little time we had some hot bread for breakfast . . . we continued our journey through a part of the bush which I believe had never before been traversed, being obliged on some occasions to creep on our hands and knees for a mile at a stretch, and at the dusk of the evening we came in sight of Eaglehawk Neck, when we would see the line literally swarming with constables and prisoners. I here enjoined my mates to preserve the strictest silence . . . The most perilous part of the adventure was in crossing the road, where constables might be lying in ambush in the scrub . . . We succeeded . . . in reaching the [water], and [fastening our clothes on our heads] we followed each other silently into the water . . . It was then blowing fresh, and the night being very dark I lost sight of my mates; on getting to the centre the waves broke clean over me, at the same time carrying away my clothes . . . and, thinking it useless to try and recover [them] . . . I continued . . . By-and-by I touched bottom . . . I could distinctly hear [Jones and Kavanagh] conversing . . . Jones said to Kavanagh, 'Martin's drowned', on hearing which I sprang to the bank . . . We were obliged to indulge in a laugh . . . as my mates as well as myself had lost [their clothing] on the passage. *The three men obtained more food and clothing from a road gang's hut near Eaglehawk Neck, tying up its caretaker, and, avoiding sentries, crossed East Bay Neck (Dunalley) at night after a few more days.*



LOOKING FURTHER: Background 8 has general information about convicts absconding. **Background 5**, **Eyewitness 14** and **Eyewitness 17** are about keeping the convicts 'in their place'. **Eyewitness 10** includes two stories about escapes by convicts: another is in **Profile 17**. Some of the persons mentioned in this section are the subject of profiles in Part 5: Lempriere (**Profile 3**), Cash (**Profile 7**), Derricourt (**Profile 11**), Stephens (**Profile 15**), Howard (**Profile 17**) and Booth (**Profile 31**). Another good escape story is told in **Eyewitness 16**.



Convict ballads and verses

Leisure was a rare luxury for convicts at Port Arthur. Apart from the Sabbath, it occurred only when an official occasion such as the Queen's Birthday or Christmas Day prompted the Administration to grant exemption from work. Martin Cash described one such occasion in 1842:

[On] the morning of Christmas Day . . . those who were kept in the cells, together with other prisoners, were permitted to assemble in the yard, and also to receive tea, sugar, tobacco, or whatever else would be given them by the free overseers. They were also permitted to smoke tobacco for that and the next three days, after which if any was found with a prisoner he would be sure of a flogging. There was a stage erected in the centre of the yard, where comic and sentimental singing was to be heard. We had Portuguese Joe in the character of Darkey, and the famed Frank the Poet, who threw off a few extempore verses for the amusement of the company, at the same time giving his coat of arms, viz. 'My name is **Frank MacNamara**, a native of Cashell, County Tipperary, sworn to be a tyrant's foe and while I've life I'll crow' . . . The day . . . passed off very pleasantly.

The Seizure of the Cyprus Brig in Recherche Bay, August 1829

by Francis MacNamara

This song, probably composed at Port Arthur, fails to mention that most of the convicts who seized the Cyprus *en route to Macquarie Harbour were recaptured after a remarkable journey across the Pacific Ocean. Their ringleader,* ***William Swallow****, died at Port Arthur in 1834.*

Come all you sons of freedom, a chorus join with me,
I'll sing a song of heroes, and glorious liberty.
Some lads condemned from England sailed to Van Diemen's shore,
Their country, friends and parents perhaps never to see more.

When landed in this colony, to different masters went;
For trifling offences, to Hobart gaol were sent.
A second sentence being incurr'd we were ordered for to be
Sent to Macquarie Harbour, that place of tyranny.

The hardships we'd to undergo are matters of record,
but who believes the convict, or who regards his word?
Starved and flogged and punished, deprived of all redress,
The bush our only refuge, with death to end distress.

Hundreds of us were shot down, for daring to be free;
Numbers caught and banished to lifelong slavery.
Brave Swallow, Watt and Davis were in our noble band,
Determined at the first slant to quit Van Diemen's Land.

March'd down in chains and guarded, on the *Cyprus* brig conveyed;
The topsails being hoisted, the anchor being weighed;
The wind it blew sou-sou-west, and on we went straightway,
Till we found ourselves windbound, in gloomy Recherche Bay.

The Seizure of the Cyprus Brig in Recherche Bay, August 1829

Moderate
Em F
Come all you sons of free - dom, A
Em D Em G
chor - us join with me. I'll sing a song of her - oes, and
Dm (Dm6) B7 Em G
glor - ious lib - er - ty. Some lads con - demned from Eng - land, sail'd
Dm (Dm6) B7 Em
to Van Die - men's— shore; their coun - try, friends and
F Em Bm Em
par - ents, per-haps ne - ver to see more.

'Twas August eighteen twenty-nine, with thirty-one on board;
Lieutenant Carew left the brig, and soon we passed the word.
The Doctor too was absent, the soldiers off their guard;
A better opportunity could never have occurred.

Confined within a dismal hold, we soon contrived a plan
To capture now the *Cyprus*, or perish every man.
But thirteen turned faint-hearted and begged to go ashore,
So eighteen boys rushed daring, and took the brig and store.

We first addressed the soldiers: 'For liberty we crave,
Give up your arms this instant, or the sea will be your grave.
By tyranny we've been opressed, by your colonial laws,
But we'll bid adieu to slavery, or die in freedom's cause.'

We next drove off the Skipper, who came to help his crew,
Then gave three cheers for liberty—'twas answered cheerily too.
We brought the sailors from below, and rowed them to the land,
Likewise the wife and children, of Carew in command.

Supplies of food and water, we gave the vanquished crew,
Returning good for evil, as we'd been taught to do.
We mounted guard with watch and word, then hauled the boat aboard.

We elected William Swallow, and obeyed our Captain's word.

The morn broke bright, the wind was fair; we headed for the sea,
With one cheer more for those on shore, and glorious liberty.
For navigating smartly, Bill Swallow was the man
Who laid a course out neatly to take us to Japan.

Then sound your golden trumpets, play on your tuneful notes.
The *Cyprus* brig is sailing—how proudly now she floats!
May fortune help the noble lads, and keep them ever free
From Gags, and Cats, and Chains and Traps, and cruel tyranny.

The Ballad of Martin Cash (or) The Sprig of Shamrock

by Francis MacNamara

MacNamara and Cash were at Port Arthur together before Cash made his escape (see Eyewitness 9) on Boxing Day 1842, but were not then acquainted with each other.

Come all you sons of Erin's Isle, that love to hear your tuneful notes
Remember William Wallace and Montrose of sweet Dundee.
The great Napoleon played his part, but by treachery was undone,
Nelson, for English's glory bled and nobly fought by sea.
And Wellington, old Erin's son, who Waterloo so bravely won,
When leading on his veteran troops, bold faced his daring foes.
But Martin Cash, of matchless fame, the bravest man that owns that name,
Is a valiant son of Erin, where the Sprig of Shamrock grows.

By treachery, as it was said, this hero to a jail was led.
'Twas Bedford who, in Campbell Town, had got him seven years.
Which sent him to the Settlement, in misery and discontent,
But soon he made his foes repent, as you shall quickly hear.
He left Port Arthur's cursed soil, saying 'No longer will I toil,'
And soon he reached the Derwent's side, in spite of all his foes.
He made the settlers crouch in dread, where'er that he showed his head;
This valiant son of Erin, where the Sprig of Shamrock grows.

It was on the salt-pan plain, he faced his enemies again,
There were Sydney blacks and horse police, and well-trained soldiers too.
But at the time when they grew near, Cash hailed them loudly with a cheer,
And let them have it, left and right; his colours were true blue.
Bravely did he stand his ground, the bullets flyin' thick around,
And like a fearless general, he faced his firin' foes.
'Surrender, Martin,' loud they cried. 'Never, till the hour I die,'
Said this valiant son of Erin, where the Sprig of Shamrock grows.

Brave Cash, not carin' for his life, to Hobart came to see his wife,
The constables who lay in wait, cried 'Martin is in view.'
Some cowards tried to block his way, but one of them soon lifeless lay;
Their numbers were increasing, and still did Cash pursue
And in the street a man rushed out who tried to stop him in his route,

But with a pistol in each hand he clean shot off his nose.
'Surrender Cash!' was still their cry, 'Never, till the hour I die!'
Said this gallant son of Erin, where the Sprig of Shamrock grows.

The Ballad of Martin Cash
(or) The Sprig of Shamrock

Steady
Am D
Come all you sons of Er - in's isle, that
Em D Am D
love to hear your tune ful notes. Re - member William Wallace and Mon-
Em Am G D Em
- trose of sweet Dun - dee The great Na - pol - eon played his part,
Am D E7 Am D
But by treach - 'ry was un - done, — Nel-son for Eng-land's glo - ry bled, and
Em Am G D Em
no - bly fought by see — And Welling - ton, old Er - in's son, who
Am D E7 Am D
Wa - ter - loo so brave-ly won, When lead - ing on his vet - 'ran troops, bold
Em D Am G D Em
faced his dar - ing foes — But Martin Cash of match-less fame, the
Am Am(D) Em Am D Em
bra - vest man that owns that name, is a val-iant son of Er-in, where the
Am D Am
Sprig of Sham - rock grows

O'erpowered and wounded, bleeding, pale, the Bobbies marched
him off to jail.
And when his trial was brought on, some hundreds listened by.
And when the Judge, with panting breath, had told him to prepare
for death,
He calmly heard the sentence, with a proud, unflinching eye.
We all have hopes that we shall see, bold Martin yet at liberty,
That shortly he will be as free as the ocean wind that blows.
He's of a good old valiant race, there's no-one can name his
disgrace;
He's a noble son of Erin, where the Sprig of Shamrock grows.

He's the bravest you could choose, from Sydney men or Cockatoos,*
And a gallant son of Erin, where the Sprig of Shamrock grows.

* *Cockatoos were men who had served time in the Cockatoo Island prison in Port Jackson (Sydney).*

Point Puer songs

These two songs were written by a convict who at one stage acted as a schoolteacher at Point Puer. No music has survived for the two songs.

My Native Land

From the sweet islands of the South,
That smile in sunny light
And gem the bosom of the main,
Like stars the brow of night;
Across the weary length of earth
And many a wide, wide sea
My soul springs back at one swift bound
My Native Land, to thee!

Though sever'd far, no stern decree
My fixed affections move;
No frowns of scorn, no arm of might,
Can rend thee from my love,
Dear as the light that rushes down
In Nature's merry glee—
Dear as my own life-blood art thou
My Native Land, to me!

Full well I know thy hills are green,
Thy vales are passing fair;
That bears—the beautiful and brave—
In pride and beauty there;
I know thy deeds in arts and arms—
That thou are great and free;
But are these all that bind my heart,
My Native Land, to thee?

Ah, no! My dearest friends are thine,
And all that kindred claim,
Yes, she for whom my bosom burns
With unextinguished flame,
And he—my gentle boy—is there,
Who breathes but love for me,
E'en 'midst the fate that bears me far,
My Native Land, from thee!

For these beneath the glorious blaze
Of southern skies I sigh;
For these amidst elysian fields
The tear bedims mine eye;
In vain the voice of kindred cheers;
In vain the burst of glee,
My bounding spirit starts away,
My Native Land, to thee.

Hope! in thy rainbow brightness rise
O'er skies that frown the while;
Oh! spread thine arch upon the storm
And bless me with thy smile
Oh! give me in thy radiant hues
Through parting clouds to see,
One, dear, sweet, promise of return
My Native Land, to thee!

The Captive

In every path of life, keen woes,
In dense array awaiting stand;
But who the depths of suffering knows,
Till banished from his native land.

If o'er the exile's slumbers creep
Sweet visions of the distant strand,
Yet soon he wakes, and wakes to weep,
As fades away his native land.

And when he views with hope's bright eyes
Vistas of opening bliss expand,
His chains, alas! recall with sighs
The memory of his native land.

But, oh, if beaming mercy smiles
And pity wave her angel hand—
His heart forgets to grieve awhile,
Forgets his lot—his native land.

—Point Puer, 1841

The 'Isle des Morts', (or) Dead Man's Island

L'Isle des Morts, or Isle of the Dead, is a small island off Port Arthur. It was the burial place for the penal establishments of Port Arthur and Point Puer. Most of its silent occupants are convicts. There is no surviving music for this song.

Isle of the dead! well might
Thy verdant bosom be,
The last retreat of honour fair,
The death-home of the free!
But, mouldering there, the slave of crime,
And wretch of blighted name
Sink in the dread repose of guilt,
To rest in graves of shame.

Isle of the exil'd dead!
To distant regions borne,
From one dear land their bleeding hearts
A word of fire had torn;
Justice looked forth, with withering frown,
And shook the avenging brand;
Whilst law rais'd up his arm of might,
And spurned them from the strand!

Isle of the homeless dead!
Within thy rock-bound breast,
Full many a heart that throbb'd for home
Now find untroubl'd rest;
For home, alas! they throbb'd in vain;
A mother's fond caress,
A father's care, a sister's smile,
Had ceas'd their hearts to bless.

Isle of the fetter'd dead!
Oft pity, weeping, stood,
To hear the clash of penal chains,
To see their tears of blood;
But now, within the silent grave,
Their earthly bondage o'er,
The clanking chain, the writhing lash,
Are heard and felt no more!

Isle of the unwep't dead!
When, 'midst the perfum'd shade
Of trees that wave in beauty there,
The last said rites are paid;
No bursts of hallow'd grief are heard,
No sighs of untold woe;
No eyes look dimly through their tears
On him that sleeps below.

Isle of the unremembered dead!
Nought of whose names remain,
Save one dark page of guilt that tells
They died amidst their chains;
No stone, with sculptured record, marks
The spot where they repose;
And friendship, turned to scorn, forgets,
Their memory in their woes.

Isle of the unhonour'd dead!
When death's dread summons calls,
No cries bespeak a nation's grief,
No pageant decks their fall;
No echoing shouts of trumpet fame
Rise pealing o'er their grave;
Their requiem is the breaker's dash,
Their dirge, the sounding wave.

Isle of the unsolac'd dead!
Oh, where when o'er their frame,
The icy thrill of death's cold touch,
And mortal anguish came;
Oh, where was then affection's hand
To close the fading eye?
The soft, sweet words of love, to soothe
That hour of agony?

Isle of the deathless dead!
The dead in thee that rest,
Though spurn'd till life itself was death,
May, even in death, be bless'd;
An angel's wing, a seraph's plume,
Their new-born life may bear
To realms where woe forgets to weep
To chainless freedom there!

—Point Puer, 1841

Moreton Bay

by Francis MacNamara

Moreton Bay was the penal settlement near the present site of Brisbane, Queensland. MacNamara never went there, but its notoriety inspired his verse. Logan died at the hands of Aborigines in 1830. Brisbane Waters, where the poet 'chanced to stray', is not far north of Sydney.

One Sunday Morning as I went walkin',
By Brisbane Waters I chanced to stray;
I heard a pris'ner his fate bewailing
As on the sunny river-banks he lay.
I am a native of Erin's island,
And banished now from my native shore;
All torn away from my aged parents
And from the girl who I did adore.

I've been a pris'ner at Port Macquarie,
At Norfolk Island, and Emu Plains,
At Castle Hill and th' accursed Toongabbie;
At all these settlements I've worked in chains.
But of all the places of condemnation,

Moreton Bay
by Francis MacNamara
Slow
One Sun - day morn - ing as I went walk - in', By
Bris-bane Wa - ters I chanced to stray I heard a pris - ner his
fate be-wail-in', as on the sun-ny ri-ver banks he lay
am a na - tive of Er - in's is - land, And ban - ished now from my
na - tive shore All torn a - way from my eg - ed par - ents, And
from the girl who I did a - dore

And penal stations of New South Wales,
To Moreton Bay I have found no equal:
Excessive tyranny each day prevails.

For three long years I was beastly treated,
And heavy irons on my legs I wore;
My back with flogging is lacerated
And often painted with my crimson gore.
And many a man from downright starvation
Lies mould'ring now underneath the clay.
And Captain Logan, he had us mangled
On the triangles of Moreton Bay.

Like the Egyptians and Ancient Hebrews,
We were oppressed under Logan's yoke,
Till a native black, lyin' there in ambush,
Did give our tyrant his mortal stroke.
My fellow pris'ners, be exhilirated
That all such tyrants such fate may find,
And when from bondage we're liberated
Our former sufferings will fade from mind.

Jack Donahue

by Francis MacNamara

Jack Donahue (sometimes spelt 'Donahoe') has been celebrated elsewhere as 'The Wild Colonial Boy'. His bushranging career ended with his death in 1830.

If you will but listen, a sorrowful tale I'll tell,
Concerning a young hero, in action lately fell.
His name it was Jack Donahue, of courage and renown;
He'd scorn to live in slavery, or be humbled to the Crown.

On the twenty-fourth of August, it was his fatal day,
As he and his companions were cruisin' the highway;
He was hail-ed by the horse police, and stood wi' heart in hand.
'Come on, my lads,' cried Donahue, 'we'll fight them man for man.'

He said unto his companions: 'Now if an' you are game,
You'll see there's only three of 'em: our numbers are the same;
We'll fight but not surrender; our freedom we'll maintain,
For today it's life and liberty, or fall upon the plain.'

'Oh no,' said cowardly Walmsley, 'your laws we'll not fulfill,
You'll see there's eight or ten of them, advancin' on yon hill;
If it comes to an engagement, you'll rue it when too late,
So turn about and come with us; we'll form a quick retreat.'

'Begone, you cowardly scoundrels; begone I pray from me,
For if we was united, we'd gain this victory.
Today I'll fight with courage bold, that all the world may see,
For I'd rather die in battle, than be hung on a gallows tree.'

They soon commenced their firin'; poor Donahue did say:
'My curse upon you Walmsley, from me you've run away.'
The one played off in front of him, the other at each side;
At length he received a mortal wound, and in his glory died.

The equals of Jack Donahue this country ne'er did see.
He did maintain his rights, me boys, and that right manfully.

He was chased about by hundreds, for three long years or more,
Until at length the Heavens decreed he should to roam no more.

The awful end of Donahue, the truth to you I've told.
And hope that all good Christians will pray for his good soul.
May the holy angels guard him; likewise our Heavenly King;
And our Saviour dear, who died for us: redeem his soul from sin.

Jack Donahue

by Francis MacNamara

Lively
Em D Em 3 Bm
If you will but lis - ten, a sor - row - ful tale I'll
Em D A
tell, con - cer - ning a young he - ro, in ac - tion late - ly
Em D A
fell His name it was Jack Don - a - hoe, of cour - age and re -
Em D 3
- nown He'd scorn to live in sla - ver - y, or be
Em B7 Em
hum - bled to the Crown

Captain Murray

Said to have been spoken by Frank MacNamara to the military Magistrate, Captain Murray, when MacNamara was facing sentence at Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney, for being drunk and disorderly.

Captain Murray, if you please
Make it hours instead of days.
You know it becomes an Irishman
To drown the Shamrock when he can.

The Company Underground

In this verse, MacNamara is referring to the coal mines of the penal settlement at Newcastle, 160 kilometres north of Sydney, dreaded by all convicts in New South Wales.

Francis MacNamara from Newcastle,
to J. Crossdale Esquire:

Greeting

When Christ from Heaven comes down straight'way
All his Father's laws to expound,
MacNamara shall work that day
For the Company Underground.

When the Man in the Moon to Moreton Bay
Is sent in shackles bound,
MacNamara shall work that day
For the Company Underground.

When the Cape o' Good Hope to Twofold Bay*
Comes for a change of a pound,
MacNamara shall work that day
For the Company Underground.

* A whaling station on the NSW South Coast.

When cows, in lieu of milk, yield tea,
And all lost treasures are found,
MacNamara shall work that day
For the Company Underground.

When the Australian Company's heaviest dray
is borne eighty miles by a hound,
MacNamara shall work that day
For the Company Underground.

When a frog, a caterpillar and a flea
Shall travel the globe around,
MacNamara shall work that day
For the Company Underground.

When turkey cocks on jews harps play,
And mountains dance at the sound,
MacNamara shall work that day
For the Company Underground.

When milestones go to church to pray,
And whales are put in the pound,
MacNamara shall work that day
For the Company Underground.

When thieves ever robbin' on the highway
For their scarcity are renowned,
MacNamara shall work that day
For the Company Underground.

When the quick or the dead shall stand in array
Sighted at the trumpet's sound,
Even then, damn me if I'd work a day
For the Company Underground. Nor Overground!

The Bold Tenant Farmer

Irish traditional song

One evenin' at Leap down to Bandon I strayed;
'Twas down by Clonakiltie I was makin' me way.
At Ballinascarty some time I delayed,
For to wet me ol' whistle with porter.

Well I'd scarcely been gone but a mile down the road,
When I heard two disputin' a farmer so bold:
The son of the landlord, an ill-lookin' toad,
And the wife of the Bold Tenant Farmer.

Hoorah for the Bold Tenant's wife! She replied:
'You're as bad as you father; you're on the wrong side.
And the National Land League will lay down your pride,
For they're able to wear every storm.'

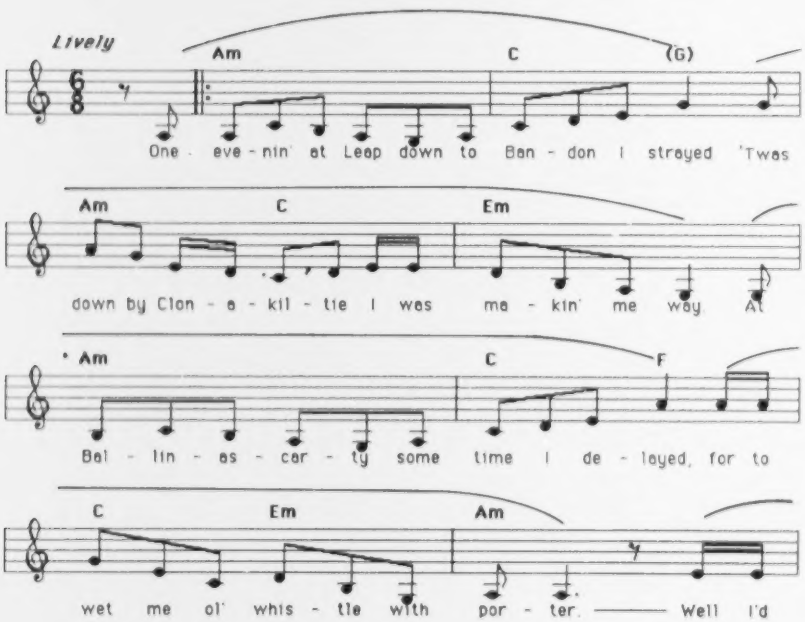
'An' if me husband he spends rent on good mountain dew,
Well I'd rather he drank it than he gave it to you;
For the likes of your father should hang from the yew,'
Said the wife of the Bold Tenant Farmer.

Well I lighted me pipe an' I spat on me fist,
And away down the road like a deer I did twist.
I care not for bailiffs, landlords or Old Nick,
And I'm off like a lark in the mornin'.

Tiddli-o-toe, tiddli-o-toe, tiddli-o-toe-tie-tum.

The Bold Tenant Farmer

Irish traditional song


Lively
Am
C
(G)
One - eve - nin' at Leap down to Ban - don I strayed 'Twas
Am
C
Em
down by Clon - a - kil - tie I was me - kin' me way. At
Am
C
F
Bal - lin - as - car - ty some time I de - layed, for to
C
Em
Am
wet me ol' whis - tle with por - ter. Well I'd

. . . *continued*

Am
C
(G)
scarce - ly been gone but a mile down the road, — when I
Am
Em
heard two dis - pu - tin' a far - mer so bold the
Am
C
F
son of the land - lord, an ill - look - in' toad, and the
C
Em
Am
Am
wife of the Bold Ten - ant Far - mer Hoo - Fer - mer Tidd - li -
- o - toe, tidd - li - o - toe, tidd - li — o - toe - tie - tum

Van Diemen's Land

Irish and Colonial song

Come all you gallant poachers, that ramble light of care,
Walk out upon a moonlit night, wi' your dog and your gun and snare.
The hare and lofty pheasants, you have at your command,
Not thinking of your last career, upon Van Diemen's Land.

Poor Thomas Brown of Maynard Town, Jack Murphy and poor Joe,
They were three darin' poachers, as the country well doth know.
By the keepers of the land, my boys, one night they was trepanned,
And for fourteen years transported, into Van Diemen's Land.

The first day that we landed, upon that fatal shore,
The planters came around us; there might be twenty-four.
They whipped us off like horses, and they sold us out of hand,
And they yoked us to the plough, me boys, to plough Van Diemen's Land.

The cottages that we live in are built with sods of clay,
We've rotten straw for bedding, but we dare not say nay.
Our cots we fence with wiring, and slumber when we can,
To keep the wolves and tigers from us in Van Diemen's Land.

Van Diemen's Land

Irish and Colonial song

Steady
Em G D7
Come all you gal - lant poa - chers, that
Em C D Em
ram - ble — light of care, Walk out up - on a
G D7 Em D
moon - lit night, Wi' your dog and your gun and
Em G D7
snare. The — hare and lof - ty — pheas - ant, you —
Em C D Em
have at — your com - mand Not think - in' of your —
G D7 Em D Em
last car - eer, u — - pon Van — Die — - men's — Land

Oft-times when I do slumber, I have a pleasant dream,
That my sweet girl's sittin' near me, down by some pearlin' stream.
I am roamin' through old Ireland, wi' me true love by me hand,
But I wake up broken hearted, upon Van Diemen's Land.

God bless our wives and families; likewise that happy shore,
That isle of sweet contentment, which we never see no more.
As for the wretched women, see them we seldom can:
There are twenty men for one woman, in Van Diemen's Land.

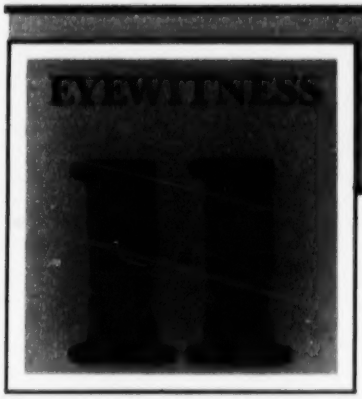
There was a girl from Nenagh Town, Pat Brophy was her name,
For fourteen years transported, for playin' of the game.
But our planter's bought her freedom, and he married her out of hand,
But she gives to us good usage, upon Van Diemen's Land.

46

For fourteen years is a long, long time; that is our fatal doom,
For nothin' else but poachin', for that is all we done.
You would leave off guns and dogs, me boys, an' poachin', every man
If you but knew the hardship that's in Van Diemen's Land.

Oh if I had just a thousand pounds, all laid out in me hand,
I'd give it all for liberty, if that I could command.
And again to Ireland I'd return, and I'd be a happy man,
And bid adieu to poachin', and to Van Diemen's Land.

LOOKING FURTHER: Profile 18 is about Francis MacNamara. The stories of Martin Cash and William Swallow are told in **Profiles 7** and **22** respectively.



Timber-getting

Timber-carrying was the first and most arduous task given to new arrivals at Port Arthur in the 1830s and 1840s. It involved carrying enormous weights of timber—either as logs or cut beams—in groups known as 'centipedes', or carrying individual loads of cut shingles. The gangs, away from the direct control of senior officials at the settlement, were often in charge of corrupt and merciless convict overseers.

Martin Cash's experience

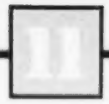
Martin Cash, 1842

The leading working party at Port Arthur was known as the carrying gang, which was divided into several departments, some carrying planks, others carrying beams, and a small party for carrying shingles . . . [I was sent] to the latter gang, which was under the control of the sub-overseer named **Benjamin Stephens**, whose reputation for cruelty and oppression had no parallel. We had to proceed for nearly four miles [6.4km] through an almost impenetrable scrub, the shingles being . . . on the summit of a steep hill named Tongataboo. The shingles were tied up in bundles, each of which was supposed to weigh twenty-five pounds [11.3kg], but in their green state would much exceed that . . . Each man having picked up his bundle, the word 'Forward' was given and off we started. We were allowed to rest at certain places marked out for that purpose, and in this manner the shingles were conveyed to Port Arthur . . .

For an account of Stephens' method of controlling and exploiting convicts in his gang, see Profile 15.

At a quarter to twelve a ball was hoisted at the flagstaff, the usual signal for the gangs working in the bush to repair to dinner, and having deposited our bundles on the station we were then conducted to our cells . . . [After dinner] we again resumed our labour and about three o'clock in the afternoon the rain came down . . . drenching us . . . to the skin. We continued to work until the ball appeared at the flagstaff, when we were conducted back to the station . . . I stood shivering in my cell, the rain dripping from my clothes, until the wardsman brought me my supper, after which I retired for the night.

The bell rang out at five o'clock on the following morning, it being two hours before daylight; and on putting on my clothes I found them nearly as wet as on the previous evening . . . [After] a week in this gang, my feet became dreadfully lacerated through wearing a very strong pair of boots . . . I remained under the doctor's [**Brownell**'s] care for the next three weeks, after which I was removed to another department, where we were employed in carrying beams twelve by twelve [inches], forty feet long [30cm by 30cm by 12m], from the saw pits [to the settlement], a distance of three to four miles [about 5 to 6km]. The manner of carrying these beams was as



follows: The party were placed at each side of the beam, and at the word 'Pick it up' being given, all hands stooped and laid hold of the beam, raising it gradually until all had it on their shoulders, and any prisoner who the overseer imagined was skulking was immediately called out and a flogging was certain to be the result.

I remained in this party for the next six weeks until, by a lucky chance, I was removed to another which was employed in cutting firewood for the station . . . two or three days after I was again picked out by a sub-overseer named Reid . . . I and another were then furnished with a saw (and I recollect that it was a very bad one) and told by Reid that he wanted a certain quantity of wood cut, and if we did not perform our task we might probably feel the consequences. In the evening, on looking at our work, Reid told us to repair to the office [the Port Arthur Courthouse]. We pointed out the very indifferent tool he had given us, but it was of no avail.

Cash and his companion were fortunate: a convict acquaintance paid off Reid with two shillings and they did not have to face punishment.

A bullying overseer

William Derricourt, convict, early 1840s

All the [timber] bearers were ranked up on each side [of the beam], and at the word 'lift' . . . all hands laid hold and raised the beam shoulder high. The sub-overseer would then tell a number of men to step from under, leaving the rest to carry the burden, upon the top of which he would always ride. When on his perch he would prevent the men steadying themselves by putting their hands on the top instead of at the side of the beam, by giving severe and often damaging raps on the knuckles. [Falling or stumbling on the rough ground] would be punished under some pretext or other.

Law of the jungle

Linus Miller, early 1840s

I was placed under an overseer named Sawyer, [who told us] . . . 'Now you new chums . . . I have you! I will run your legs all off and have a dozen flogged before night into the bargain. Come on and I'll show you what it is to work.' [Each convict received 200 pounds, or 91km, weight of timber, and if anyone claimed they couldn't manage the burden:] 'Go along without them then and I'll take you to the office. You don't know what the office is . . . As sure as I take you there you'll be flogged and sent to bring the very loads you now refuse . . . There's no such word as can't at Port Arthur.'

No man was to bend his back while carrying; this convict—Miller—was taller than most and had to shoulder most of the load. His feet became raw; he was not allowed to wear socks so he tore his shirt to make rough ones. When he took off the 'socks' at night, 'pieces of flesh often adhered to them and they were stiff with congealed blood'. Miller needed the superintendent's intervention to escape the brutal punishment.

A severe duty

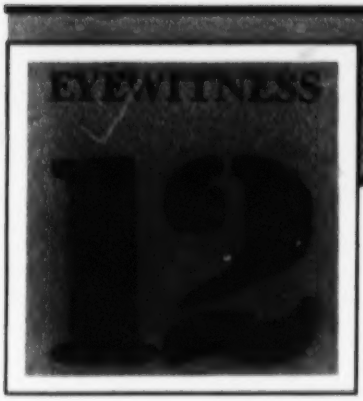
James Ross, writer and visitor, 1836

One of the most severe duties the prisoner is put to perform [is] the carrying of large logs from the . . . almost impassable parts of the

woods to the beach . . . we saw a gang of thirty men stoop down with the overseer at their head, and shoulder a log many tons in weight until they carried it to its destination. Seen at a distance they look like an enormous centipede . . . Self-preservation compels every one to do his best to support the immense weight which . . . would crush him at once to death . . . unless his companions . . . did their part . . . Dreadful as this species of labour or rather of punishment is, I am convinced from what I saw that it is attended with the very best results—that it forms the first grand step to reform among the unhappy men . . . Its severity and danger have been objected to . . . for should a portion of the bearers . . . slip their feet . . . many dreadful deaths must of necessity ensue.

LOOKING FURTHER: Background 7 and **Eyewitness 6** are about industry in general terms. **Eyewitness 1** has accounts of dockyard activity, and **Eyewitness 12** has information about the Coal Mines. **Background 5** and **Eyewitness 5** are about punishment at Port Arthur. **Profiles 7** (Cash), **14** (Miller) and **15** (Stephens) have references to timber-getting. Dr Thomas Brownell's story is told in **Profile 24**, and William Derricourt's in **Profile 11**.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



The Coal Mines

From the early 1830s coal was known to exist near Saltwater River and in late 1833, on Commandant ***Booth****'s advice, a mine was opened up at Plunkett Point at which the 'most refractory convicts' laboured to produce coal for the fires of Hobart Town. The men worked in small, dark tunnels lit only by the occasional oil lamp and badly affected by sea-water sometimes filtering, occasionally flooding, into the mine. Entry was down a shaft on a convict-controlled winch, which also took out the coal for lading on to ships. Up to four hundred men at a time worked the mine, which was closed as a government operation in 1848.*

A visitor's impression—a dreadful vocation

David Burn, writer, 1842

Our Thursday's tour ended at the coal mines—a station semi-probationary, semi-penal. It contains an extensive stone penitentiary, to which large additions are about to be made; a military barracks for thirty men, officers' quarters, commissariat store, and sundry other stone edifices . . . Next morning I descended the main shaft along with Captain Booth. It is fifty-two yards deep [47.5m]. The winch was manned by convicts under punishment; one stroke of the knife might sunder the rope, and then—however, it has never been tried, deeds of ferocity being very infrequent. A gang on the surface worked the main pump, and another below plied a horizontal or slightly-inclined drawpump, which threw the water into the chief well. The seam has been excavated 110 yards [100.5m] from the shaft, having also several chambers diverging right and left; the height of the bore is four feet [1.2m] . . . The mines are esteemed the most irksome punishment the convict encounters, because he is not a practised miner, and because he labours night and day, eight hours on a spell.

Continued stooping and close atmosphere caused our party to be bedewed with perspiration. I cannot . . . wonder at the abhorrence of the compulsory miner [for mine work] . . .

Feelings of horror

Rev. Henry Fry, visitor, 1847

I descended into the mines accompanied by Mr Skene [the superintendent], being let down in a bucket. The shaft is 303 feet [91m] deep*. On reaching the bottom, we would have been in complete darkness but for the lights borne by some men who descended with us. We groped our way with difficulty along passages which are said to be five miles [8km] in length. The roof in many places is so low, that we were obliged to creep along the passage beneath it. The air was so confined and so damp, that our lamps could with difficulty be kept burning, and several of them went out.

* The difference between this depth and that quoted in the previous excerpt is due to the passage of time (1842 to 1847).

A few lamps at long intervals were attached to the walls, but seemed only like sparks glimmering in the mist, and not many yards from them the passage was in perfect darkness. There were eighty-three men at work in the mines when I visited them, the greater number employed in wheeling the coal to the shaft to be hoisted up. They worked without any other clothing than their trousers, and perspired profusely. The men in the mine were under the charge of a prisoner-overseer and a prisoner-constable . . . it was utterly impossible for them, even if willing, to exercise any supervision over the men in the mines. Few free persons have ever ventured down; the chaplain, who has resided several years at the mines, has never been down in them. Having had full evidence of the deeds of darkness perpetrated in the mines, I contemplated the naked figures faintly perceptible in the gloom, with feelings of horror. Such a scene is not to be forgotten.

A convict's view

William Derricourt, early 1840s

The day after my reaching the mines I was placed in one of the shifts and set to work . . . In hauling up the coal to the top eight men were employed at the roller and flywheel . . . On the top of the colliery shaft there was a large crank, called the 'Walmsley', which was worked by twelve men on each side continually pumping water from the workings—Sundays as well as week days.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

On my first morning I was lowered down the shaft sitting face to face with another man, and our whole shift thus came down in couples, sitting astride on an iron bar, with a hook at each end and the rope from the roller passing through a hole in the middle . . . At the bottom of the shaft . . . we met three men, or 'Dervon donkeys' as we used to call them, hauling a truck of water . . . They were, because of the lowness of the drive, almost on all fours, holding on and dragging with their hands on the rails. Some of them had boots, and some of them, who were not yet due for 'slops', had none. They were puffing and blowing, and reeking and steaming from their exertions . . .

In my turn I was fitted with my harness. A collar was passed over my shoulders and I had breeching and trace chains, which last were passed between my legs and fastened by a hook to the drag chain, which ran from the leading donkey to the coal truck. Three men were hooked on in front one after the other, and the fourth, or putter, was stationed behind to prevent tipping up . . . The drives were lighted, though dimly enough, by lamps filled with oil or fat. These added greatly to the stifling heat of the mine. The haulers were able to wear nothing but their trousers.

Being yoked up in the way described, the word was given to start and off we went, up and down for about a mile [1.6km] to the face of the workings . . . I, a new hand, had for my position the sharpest and hardest part of the road, near the shaft. This was the usual plan, as later the newcomer could be promoted to a more level way further in . . .

By continual working in the drives [in the mines . . . my boots became] utterly useless. I could not even tie them on my feet. It wanted two months to the time when boots would be served out, and for one entire month I worked quite barefooted in the mine, and had to walk from it to the yards in the same state. My feet at last became so burned and blistered that the pain was almost unbearable.

LOOKING FURTHER: **Background 7** and **Eyewitness 6** give general accounts of industrial activity, and **Background 5** and **Eyewitness 5** are about punishment and reform. **Profile 6** (Purslowe) and **Profile 11** (Derricourt) are about people who were at the Coal Mines.

Health, sickness, death

The food—some differing views

Martin Cash, 1842

My dinner, for which I had an excellent appetite [after hauling bundles of shingles], consisted of six ounces of salt pork, one pint of soup and twelve ounces of brown bread. I cannot describe the soup, but I can [describe] . . . the manner in which it is prepared, viz., the salt pork when boiled is taken from the copper, which being again nearly filled with water, the allotted quantity of Swedish turnips and cabbages are then cut up and placed in the copper, and when nearly cooked one or two pieces of the pork are again returned to the copper with a view to giving it a flavour. Each prisoner was allowed one pint of this compound . . .

David Burn, writer, 1842

After service we accompanied the Commandant to the cookhouse, where the respective rations were about to be issued. The manner in which this is arranged is admirable. The messes, varying from twelve to twenty-six men . . . select, in daily rotation, two delegates, who receive the victuals, and afterwards apportion each man his share . . . They then sit down and consume all the food that is set before them [keeping food after meals is forbidden to prevent prisoners hoarding it for absconding] . . . The meal . . . is not only ample but nutritious, consisting of an excellent soup, good wheaten bread [tasted both], and beef, mutton or pork—such a meal . . . as would rejoice the heart and gladden the eyes of many an honest, hard-working, hungry Briton.

William Derricourt, early 1840s

At the Coal Mines—When [the meal] . . . was ready one man stood up with his back to the table, and another, tapping each successive lot of victuals with his knife, asked 'Who shall have this?' If there was a particularly bony portion, the auctioneer would strike the bone smartly with the knife, and then he always got from his assistant the answer, 'New Chum'. Because of my well-known skill with my fists, I, however, soon escaped from being put upon in this way . . . When the commissary boats came from the Sounds with rations . . . I . . . always volunteered [to carry stores]. In carrying meat, I, being strong as a horse, would reach . . . the embankment first . . . Should there be a bit of meat to be screwed off, off it came, and the same with flour when I could manage to get any by sticking my fingers into the bottoms of the bags. Raw potatoes, too, were heartily devoured. The only way to get anything without detection was to bolt it immediately.

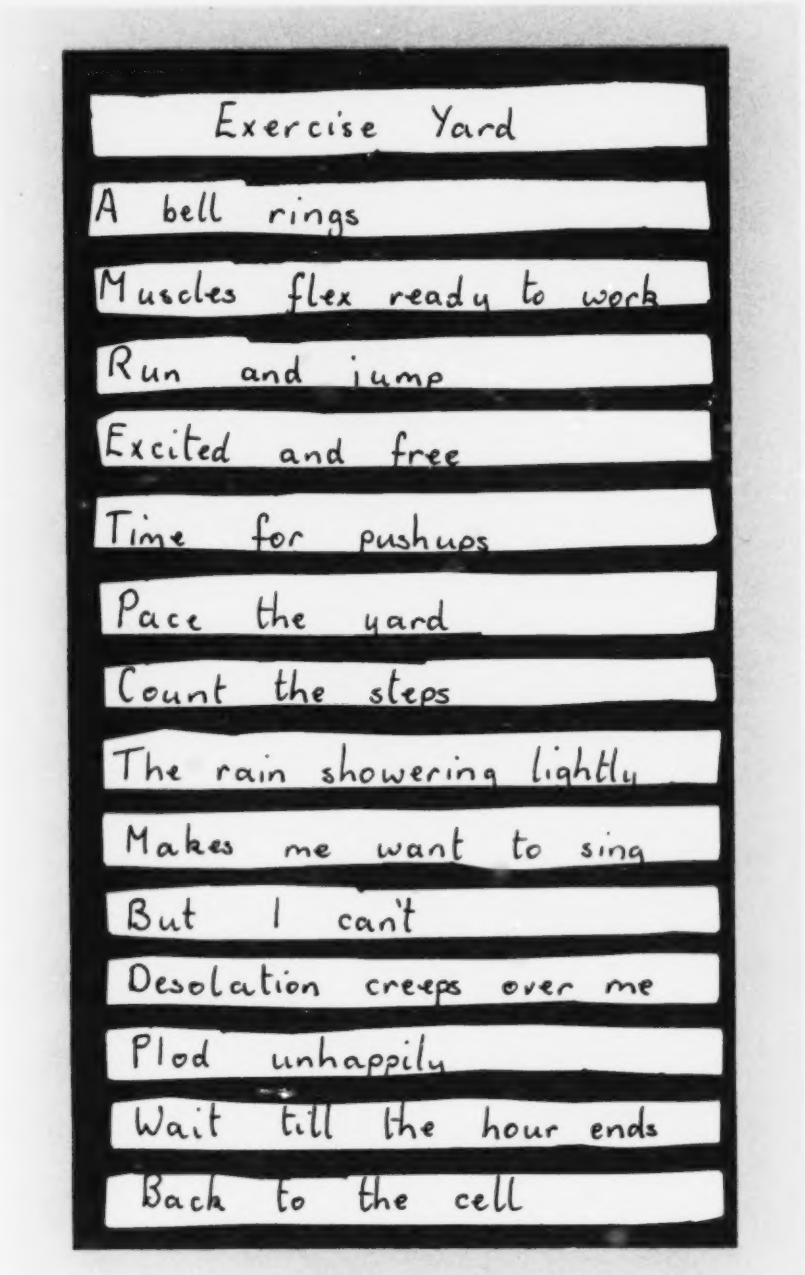
Accommodation and clothing

David Burn, writer, 1842

The clothing of the convicts is of woollen cloth, dyed yellow, or partly black, partly yellow. They are furnished with two complete suits, shirts, and [pairs of] boots a year. Their quarters are clean, well ventilated, and frequently whitewashed. They have a sufficiency of bedding, which during the day is folded up, each man sleeping in a separate berth.

Rev. Henry Fry, 1847

There is not one building at Port Arthur inhabited by convicts, which is built of brick or of stone; all the huts are weather-boarded, close, decayed, and incapable of being fitted up with proper berths divided by partitions . . . [Despite public testimony] the huts remained in the same condition.



Martin Cash, 1842

My apartment was six feet long by three wide [1.8m by 90cm], in the corner of which, folded up with military precision, lay my bedding, consisting of a single blanket, rug and empty canvas mattress cover. I stood shivering in my cell, the rain dripping from my clothes, until the wardsman brought me my supper, after which I retired for

the night . . . on putting on my clothes [the next morning] I found them nearly as wet as on the previous evening.

William Derricourt, early 1840s

For bedding I was provided with an empty tick [mattress cover], one blanket and one rug, and was locked up alone to think over my sad condition. In order to make my scanty bedding as warm and comfortable as I could, I was in the habit of rolling my blanket and rug inside my tick, and then creeping inside into the middle of the folds.

Tricking the doctors

William Derricourt, early 1840s

I asked [my neighbour] how I could manage to get off the chain. He said: '. . . I have a bit of copper in my pocket . . . Get a bit of string and tie it tight round the muscles of your arm. Keep the copper always on your tongue when you are in your cell of a night, and, when you are ready to face the doctor, say, when you are called, that you are too sick to get up. The doctor will be sent for. Upon hearing him coming, knock your elbows hard on the wall. The doctor will want to feel your pulse and see your tongue—without the copper though. He'll exempt you from work, and you can lie in your cell all day. If you want to keep up the game take some soap pulls to upset you.'

I followed his advice and found that the plan answered. I succeeded in making myself appear to be very ill, and was taken off the cable.

Mass treatment

Thomas Brownell, surgeon, 1843

I have no assistance excepting . . . a Dispenser . . . The number of cases . . . in . . . 1842 was upwards of 13,000, of these a portion were treated in Hospital, our number of deaths ten. An [excellent] mortality [rate] . . .

A doctor's kindness

Martin Cash, 1842

Being now a week in this [carrying] gang, my feet became dreadfully lacerated through wearing a very strong pair of boots . . . and a tumour appearing in one of my toes I was unable to walk, and consequently had to apply to the doctor [Mr Brownell], who, on examining my foot, observed that I did very well in coming, or in all probability I might have lost my foot. It had struck me at the time that he was the first person I had seen at Port Arthur who evinced the slightest feeling of humanity. I remained under his care for three weeks . . .

A wretched state

Commandant Mahon, 1832

The Hospital is in the most wretched State of Poverty, not even a Bougee [*bougie*: an instrument for probing bodily passages] to administer to the relief of the Prisoner nor rag to dress his Sores.

[Three months later:] The hospital overseer was still without instruments; and had to use two or three rough knives made at Port Arthur, and darning needles. He had no sticking plaster, nor the materials to make it, and had to use rendered down salt pork for common ointment.

An extraordinary number of sick

Governor William Denison, January 1849

I feel . . . called upon to notice the extraordinary number of sick at Port Arthur. It appeared that at the time of my visit upwards of ten per cent of the total number of Convicts were in Hospital and another ten per cent exempted to light labour; while I was assured by the Medical Officer [**Dr Brownell**] that there was no epidemic complaint prevalent among the men.

Denison had earlier noted there were a large number of prisoners in hospital 'since the present Medical Officer has been in charge.' The matter would have to be investigated.

No medicine

Journal of Thomas Lempriere

8 April 1834—Poor Frank [Francis Manton, son of Rev. **John Manton**] is very ill and I hear from the Doctor's words alarmingly so—what a shame it is that a place like this with near 700 souls should be left without medicines—such is the case and a remedy for a cough even is wanting.

The wrong medicine

Journal of Thomas Lempriere

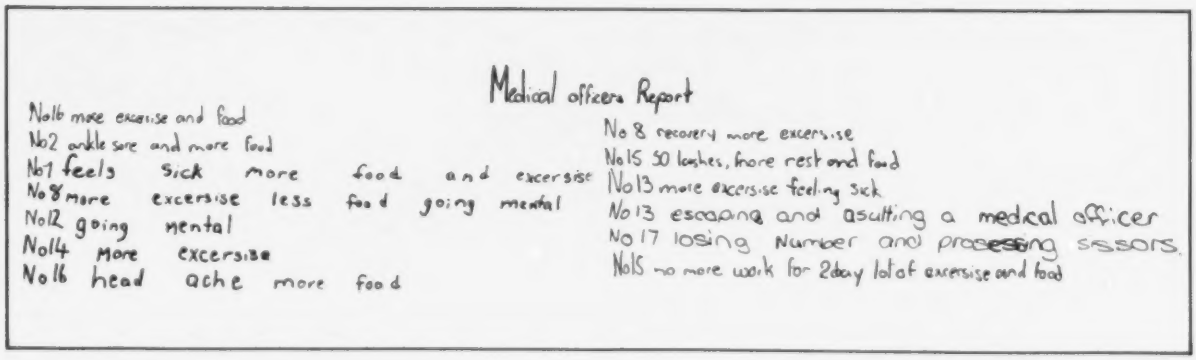
21 January 1838—Mr **Cart**'s baby very ill in consequence of the dispenser giving one-half grain opium and some magnesia, instead of one-quarter grain calomel [used as laxative] and some magnesia—it is only two months old—is not expected to live . . . 3 March 1838—Edward Cart, Mr Cart's baby, died.

Death and burial

Linus Miller, convict assistant to chaplain, 1841

When a prisoner died, his remains were dissected, put in a rough coffin in a state of perfect nudity, carried to the wharf by four men, placed in a boat, and amid the jeers and curses of the boatmen, conveyed to the landing place at the Isle of the Dead. Here it is left until the clergyman [see Profile 20] arrives, when it is borne to the grave . . .

LOOKING FURTHER: Background 10 provides an overall perspective of health and illness at Port Arthur. **Profile 24** is about a medical officer. The life of William Cart is outlined in **Profile 16**.


Medical officers Report
No6 more excersise and food
No2 ankle sore and more food
No7 feels sick more food and excersise
No8 more excersise less food going mental
No12 going mental
No14 More excersise
No16 head ache more food
No 8 recovery more excersise
No15 50 lashes, more rest and food
No13 more excersise feeling sick
No13 escaping and assulting a medical officer
No17 losing Number and processing scissors.
No15 no more work for 2days lot of excersise and food

Controlling the convicts

Inadequate supervision, corrupt overseers

Rev. Henry Fry, visitor, 1847

Mr **William Cart** has been superintendent for fifteen years . . . under circumstances of the greatest difficulty, being required to preserve order and discipline, and to execute a great deal of work with a most inadequate supply of officers. In 1846, there were 1112 prisoners at Port Arthur, and but sixteen free overseers; in 1847 there were 1220 convicts and but seventeen overseers, or less than one overseer to seventy men . . . The free overseers at present amount to nineteen . . . Twenty-five twice-convicted criminals are employed as watchmen and gate-keepers. It is believed that these are of the worst class of convicts, termed the flash-men, and that they hold their appointments by consent of the men, on the secret understanding of tolerating their crimes and neglect of work.

The semaphores

John Evenden, former chief constable, reminiscing in 1884

The strength of the police force on Tasman and Forestier Peninsulas [in the 1840s] was . . . one chief constable, three district constables, two senior constables, eighty petty sworn constables and 100 to 150 acting constables . . . The chief constable invariably communicated his orders for guarding the coast round the Peninsula by semaphore telegraph, of which there were twenty-one stations extending over Tasman and Forestier Peninsulas . . . The signal code was also revised and improved in alphabetical order . . . A telegram of twenty words has been sent to Hobart Town and a reply received in fifteen minutes, having to pass through five stations. The Chief Constable when travelling on foot or on horseback invariably carried a good telescope and from his perfect knowledge of the code could read any signal being passed from any distant signal station, and in like manner could detect any bad look out . . . Each signal station was provided with good clocks and the correct time given each day at twelve noon by the dip of a ball from the yard arm at the chief station.

Civilian officials

The following positions are listed in *Woods Royal Kalendar and Almanack, 1847*:

Port Arthur	Commandant, visiting magistrate, religious instructor, Roman Catholic catechist, superintendent of convicts, dockyard superintendent, schoolmaster, sheep farm superintendent, commandant's clerks (2), superintendent's clerks (3), lumber yard clerk (1), storeman, chief constable, commander and mate of supply ship *Swallow*.

Point Puer	Superintendent, assistant superintendent, catechist, Roman Catholic catechist.
Coal Mines	Superintendent, visiting magistrate, religious instructor, medical officer, Roman Catholic catechist, assistant superintendents (3), storekeeper, overseers (4), wharfinger.
Salt Water River	Superintendent, visiting magistrate, catechist, medical officer, assistant superintendents (2), overseers (4).
Impression Bay	Superintendent, visiting magistrate, religious instructor, medical officer, assistant superintendents (2), storekeeper, overseers (4).
Cascades	Superintendent, visiting magistrate, catechist, medical officer, assistant superintendents (2), storekeeper, overseers (3).

A conspiracy thwarted

James Ross, writer, 1836

On one occasion while the Commandant [**Captain Booth**] was slowly approaching a gang of forty men, who were at work on a small eminence, he was met behind a bush by one who had withdrawn himself from the others, and who cautioned him not to

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

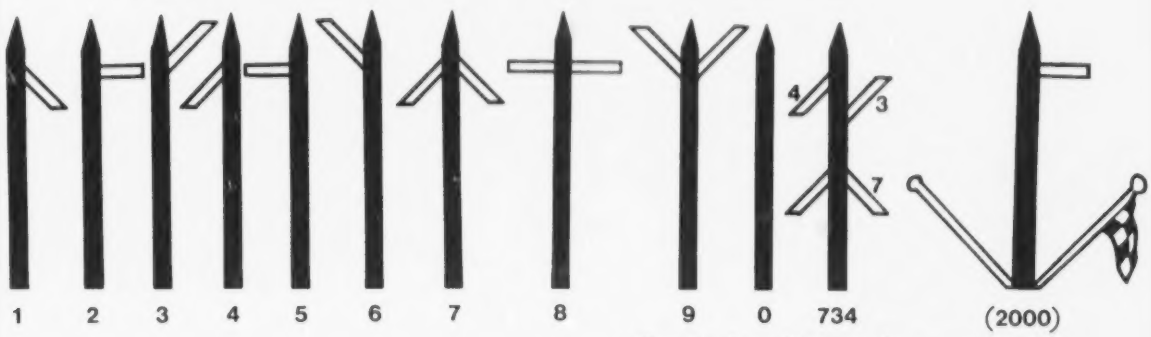
approach nearer, for he had overheard a conspiracy among them to put him to death as soon as he came up. He had good reason to believe that the man spoke some truth . . . for he had lately observed symptoms of insubordination . . . Without stopping he desired the man to follow him, and calling to the overseer he directed him, as the work was in different parts, to separate a portion of the men from the others. Then walking up alone into the main body who, taken by surprise, betook themselves earnestly to their work, he briefly explained to them what had been told him, and calling up a man whom he knew to be the ringleader, he cautioned him against encouraging any attempt of the kind, for, said he, before you could have approached me you must have been a dead man, for I should not have hesitated to shoot you on the instant, and he pointed to the pistols with which he is invariably armed.

How the semaphore system worked

Each mast had three pairs of arms and two flagpoles.

The semaphore system used code numbers—each number representing a word or phrase.

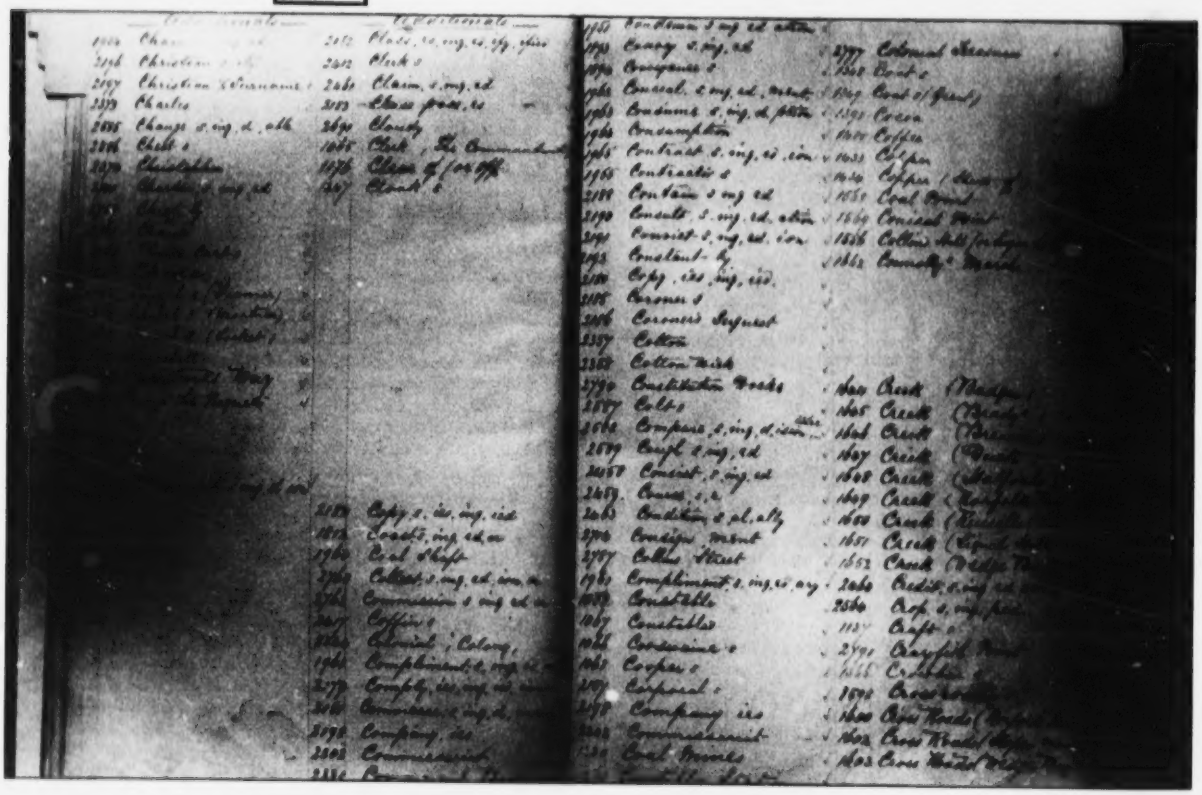
Time
1522 After
1523 At what hour
1524 Before
1525 Day
1526 Daylight



Each number had its own arm position, with the top pair representing units, the middle pair tens and the bottom pair hundreds.

For the four-figure code numbers, a chequered flag was raised while the top arms signalled how many thousands. Then the flag was lowered to half-yard while the remaining three figures were posted.

60



A secure peninsula-prison

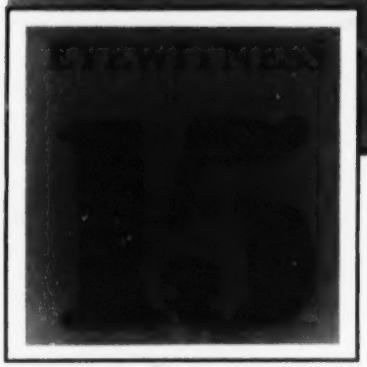
David Burn, writer, 1842

In passing along the road on the settlement after dark, every sentry challenges . . . Every soldier invariably bears loaded arms . . . Such is the severity of discipline, such the rigidity of scrutiny, aye, and such the felons' mutual distrust, that anything like concerted revolt is as hopeless as impracticable . . .

. . . We set sail for Eagle Hawk Neck—a hummocky, sandy isthmus, situated at the extreme of a deep bight . . . about a quarter of a mile in length, and 300 yards in breadth [0.4km by 274m]. Sentries are posted night and day, and as yet more infallible security, a chain of thirteen ferocious dogs is placed at intervals across its breadth, these dogs receiving a regular ration from the commissariat. At night a row of lamps in the same direction as the dogs is lit up, a measure which precludes the possibility of escape . . . These singular formations [Eaglehawk Neck and East Bay Neck at Dunalley] lead one to the almost natural conclusion that Tasman and Forestier Peninsulas were designed for the purpose to which they have been applied.

LOOKING FURTHER: **Background 4** has general information, and **Eyewitness 17** tells of a soldier's role. **Background 8** and **Eyewitness 9** are about convicts' escapes, successful or otherwise. Punishment is dealt with in **Background 5** and **Eyewitness 5**. **Profile 15** includes an account of the way a convict overseer managed things. William Cart is the subject of **Profile 16**, and Chief Constable Richard Newman is **Profile 27**.

61 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

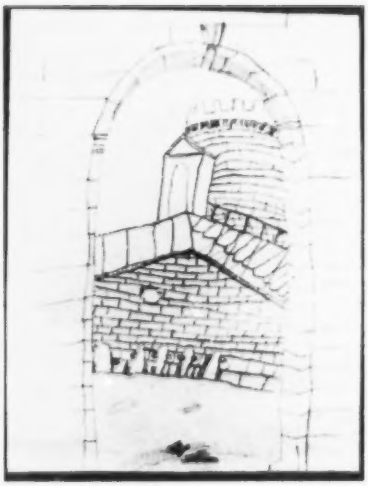


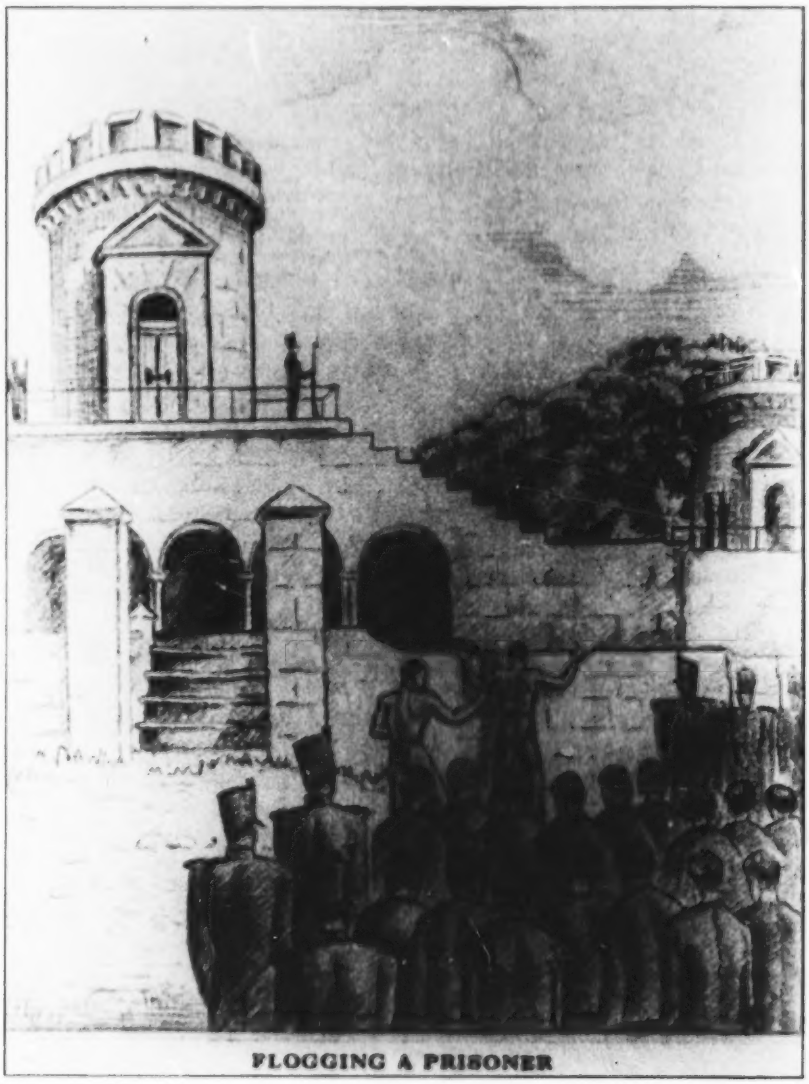
Routine procedures

Martin Cash, 1842

On arrival

[At] eight o'clock on the following morning, [the convict transport] dropped anchor at Port Arthur. We were then brought on deck and sent on shore in a launch, and immediately after we were ranked up in the office, where we had to wait inspection. The barber here made his appearance, and in an incredible short space of time freed us from everything in the way of embellishment. He scorned the use of a comb on this occasion, merely catching the hair with one hand and using the scissors with the other. Our descriptions were then taken by clerks of the establishment (no easy matter, by-the-by), and it now only remained for us to be introduced to the Commandant . . .





FLOGGING A PRISONER

62 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

[After his address to us we were dismissed and] conducted to our respective cells . . . We were next taken to the stores, where the irons were removed from those who were not sentenced to wear them, each prisoner being supplied with a suit of yellow clothing. Our private clothing was taken from us with the exception of our braces, which was the only article of our own we were allowed to possess—and here let me observe that it would have been better for a good many had the latter been taken also, as I have known men to be flogged and otherwise persecuted simply because they would not give their braces to the [convict] sub-overseers . . .

On getting our outfit we were re-conducted to our cells, where I found a tin plate and pannikin, to which my local number was affixed. The scavenger now made his appearance bearing a basket containing . . . bread . . . with a pannikin of skilley [*skilley:* a compound of flour and water] which constituted our breakfast.

Magpie suits

William Derricourt, convict, 1842

On reaching Port Arthur we were thoroughly washed and supplied each with a new magpie suit, pannikin, dish, spoon, bed, blanket and two shirts. The suit of slops• was supposed to last six months. The custom was for two men to go into partnership and save a pair of trousers each when new things were given out. When opportunity offered these trousers were given to the tailors, of whom there were always several among us. The tailors would separate the two colours, and by joining black to black and yellow to yellow, make, instead of magpie garments, one pair of black and one of yellow. The former would be sold to the soldiers, and the latter dyed with some material found in the bush, and the numbers removed with soft soap and turpentine.

• A 'suit of slops' was a matching set of loose-fitting garments.

Rising before dawn

Martin Cash, 1842

The bell rang out at five o'clock . . . it being two hours before daylight . . . We were then escorted by a host of constables and watchmen to yards adjoining the cells, in order to perform our ablutions, and on returning to our domiciles, we received the stipulated quantity of brown bread and skilley, after which we were left to cool our heels in anticipation of daylight, at which time we resumed our labours.

Clothing and bedding

Thomas Lempriere, 1839

The clothing furnished to the boys is the same as that allowed to other prisoners throughout the Colony: two jackets, two pairs of trousers, two pairs of boots, two striped cotton shirts, one cloth waistcoat, one cap; annually. The above, if the material is good and proper attention paid to timely repairs, is quite sufficient. The bedding consists of: one rug, one blanket, one bed tick or hammock.

Guard Tower.

The Guard Tower was built in 1835. Most of the stones were prepared by the boys at Point Puer. The building was used as a guard room and had cells for prisoners ready to go to Hobart for trial. It was also a place to store fire arms.

Conformity

David Burn, writer, 1842

Upon their arrival [the convicts] . . . are closely searched, being prohibited from having money, tobacco, or any document. The standing regulations of the settlement are then read, and an earnest caution to act in conformity given. They are next taken to the hospital, where each undergoes an individual examination by the medical officer [see Eyewitness 13 and Profile 24]. Labour proportionate to their strength is then assigned, the physically incapacitated being employed in stone-breaking.

LOOKING FURTHER: Background 3 and **Eyewitness 4** give impressions of Port Arthur's general appearance. **Eyewitness 11** and **Eyewitness 12** tell of life in the timber gangs and the Coal Mines. **Background 10** and **Eyewitness 13** deal with injury and sickness and the disposal of the dead. Lempriere's life is outlined in **Profile 3**, Cash's in **Profile 7** and Derricourt's in **Profile 11**.

EYEWITNESS

16

Leisure for the free

Cricket and horse-racing

Journal of Thomas Lempriere, February 1838

Williams [an official] today struck in right eye by cricket ball [in a match between military and civil officials]

Journal of Thomas Lempriere, 7 January 1847

We had a meeting of the Port Arthur Turf Club . . . the races went off well.

A fete al fresco

David Burn, writer, 1842

This day, the 10th of January, the anniversary meeting and examination [of the Sabbath School] were held . . . The examination over, the children proceeded to a marquee formed by the *Favourite's* [supply and transport ship] sails and flags, and tastefully adorned with a profusion of native wreaths and garlands. In this marquee they enjoyed a fete al fresco, tea, coffee, cake, raspberries, gooseberries, currants, and other fruits being abundantly supplied. It was an era in their lives, an event of pleasant contemplation to the spectators. The children satisfied, a like refreshment was next provided for their delighted parents, and after some very apposite observations from the patron, the Rev. Messrs **Manton** and Simpson, and also Major Robertson [elected a member of the committee], the state of the funds was declared.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A happy group

Mrs Jemima Frances Irvine, wife of an official, reminiscing on her Port Arthur days in the 1840s.

Port Arthur society was 'charming and interesting'.

There were no lawyers—we were a peaceful settlement.

Fine sport

Journal of Captain Booth, 1833

25 April 1833—Whale in the Bay—Manned 'The Commandant's Whale Boat' with Crew—Erle Headsman and Jackson at Steer Oar —Pick up Boat with Carte [**Cart,** see Profile 16] and self—started after it and run alongside [in Stinking Bay] the huge Monster manfully —struck him beautifully—the first shot of the Boat—one of the finest sights I ever witnessed (Steam Coach rate of going a joke to it)*—After many Lances having been played into him and almost killed, Spouting Blood—by some accident or more misfortune the hold of the Harpoon gave way and he escaped—but afforded us an hour and a half capital Sport.

* Meaning that the whale's speed in attempting to escape, pulling the whale-boat with it, made a joke of the recently publicised journey of the new Steam Coach in Britain.

A lazy day

Journal of Thomas Lempriere, 1834

1 April 1834—Today went over in the *Independent,* a boat for the use of lazy **Manton** and myself, to fish . . . brought home two Perch, a Parrot fish, Rock Cod and a Crawfish—took a tea with Mrs Manton . . .

A birthday party

Lempriere's 41st birthday—Captain ***Booth,*** *Chaplain* ***(Manton)*** *and wife, Surgeon* ***(Brownell),*** *William and Mrs* ***Cart*** *invited.*

Journal of Thomas Lempriere, 1837

We made a dining-room out of the childrens' room. Having got rid of the beds and having whitened the walls, we ornamented them with branches of fern trees, and a crown of flowers hanging from above over the table. Dinner did not pass very smoothly, the servants are so clumsy . . . We had Soup, a superb Trumpeter, a goose—round of Beef, Rabbits, wild Duck—chickens, a Ham &c . . . The Commandant proposed my toast and of course I made a speech—we passed the evening very pleasantly and parted at midnight.

Booth's journal records: 'A General feed at Lempriere's—very ridiculous.'

Taking a walk

Journal of Thomas Lempriere, 1837

12 February 1837—Beautiful weather, to church twice, in the afternoon the Commandant **[Booth],** Mr & Mrs **Cart, Charlotte** and myself and children took a walk in the Government gardens [Garden Point] and returned by boat.

66

A picnic and an escape

Former Chief Constable John Evenden, reminiscing on the 1840s

The military officer in charge of the detachment at Port Arthur obtained . . . authority for a whale boat and prisoner boat crew [with] . . . a military guard in the boat. The boat left the settlement about 1 pm, the military officer leaving at the same time on horseback accompanied by several ladies and gentlemen, intending to have a picnic on shore in Safety Cove. Cooking utensils, and all the usual appliances for tea and coffee brewing were sent in the boat. The provisions were sent overland. On arrival of boat and net, preparations were made for hauling the net at once. On the first landing of the net a good supply of fish was caught, when all was bustle and haste to clean and fry a supply of fish for the party. The boat at this time was moored off the shore on the north side of Safety Cove Bay, distant from picnic party about 300 yards.

One of the prisoner crew inquired if the boat was to be brought over to take on board the net for another haul of fish. The military officer replied 'yes'. The [convict] crew . . . six in number proceeded to do so, and on getting on board quietly pulled out towards the 'Heads'. The party on shore called out to the boat 'don't go out too far' [and] they replied 'we are going to drive the fish in shore'. It was now believed that they had absconded, as it was then found out that the military guard for the boat was not on board, but busily engaged in getting the net ready . . .

The officer sent a man on his horse to Port Arthur to raise the alarm; a boat was dispatched in pursuit but the absconders used a sail to escape to Bruny Island; having stolen provisions from a settler they then sailed up the East Coast. They were caught on the East Coast four days later and had two years added to their sentences.

LOOKING FURTHER: Background 9 provides a general impression of the way free people lived at Port Arthur. **Eyewitness 17** is about the soldier's role, and **Eyewitness 7** tells of informal contact between free people and convicts. **Eyewitness 10** gives a glimpse of convicts' leisure.

A soldier's life

Soldiers played a critical role at Port Arthur. From September 1830, when the 'first fleet' arrived in the harbour, the Army had the job of keeping the prisoners in their place. The military's role involved guard and sentry duty, overseeing work and keeping records. An officer of the 63rd Regiment, Assistant Surgeon John Russell, had an impossibly broad range of duties: he was to be commandant, medical officer and chaplain.

'Every security for the safe keeping of convicts'—that was the stated aim of military deployment from the early 1830s. By 1833 the military strength on the Peninsula was seventy men. These included over thirty men at Port Arthur, twenty at Eaglehawk Neck and small details at Sloping Main and Wedge Bay. The Coal Mines and the new probation stations of the 1840s brought a need to gradually strengthen the military detachment, eventually to over 300 men.

It was not all beer and skittles for the Peninsula soldier (though skittles were an important part of his recreation). Rations were increased for penal service, but life could be dreary in the extreme, an endless round of sentry, guard and barracks duties with rarely a moment of excitement.

The first of the following Extracts from Orders were issued to be read to all soldiers serving on Tasman Peninsula. The second was for soldiers at Eaglehawk Neck, 'the key to the peninsula'. All serving personnel were expected to know their duties by heart, and to be able to repeat them on demand.

Standing Orders for the Detachments of Military Stationed on Tasman's Peninsula (1838)

As nothing can more effectually contribute to the security and discipline of a penal settlement than good example, and the correct and vigilant performance of the duties by the military, the Commandant expects that the detachments on Tasman's Peninsula, will at all times be watchful and ready in their duty . . . It is hoped that without caution, the pride that ought to reign in the breasts of every British Soldier, would induce them not to so far forget themselves, their corps, and the respect they owe to their profession, as to make associates of deluded men who have placed themselves in so low a scale of society . . .

The detachments will at all times consider themselves on duty: and never leave the vicinity of their quarters without permission, go near the penitentiary or prisoners' huts (except on duty), nor are they to permit any prisoner about the military barracks, or hold conversation with them.

In the event of any alarm or fire, every man will immediately repare to the barracks and stand to his arms . . . The arms of the

detachment will at all times be kept loaded both in barracks and on guard.

The guard will mount every day at the usual time at the usual hour of parade . . . The role call, will take place at 8 o'clock (pm), after which hour no man will be allowed to quit his barracks, and all lights must be extinguished . . . and the men remain perfectly quiet . . .

The Sentinels will be most particular to challenge in a distinct and audible voice, and should any person attempt to pass their post without halting, will be justified in firing at such person or persons . . .

All soldiers are particularly cautioned against speaking to any of the women on the settlement, or going near their quarters . . .

The soldiers on no occasion, are authorised to take a boat or require a cart on the rail road without a written authority from an officer

Standing Orders, Eagle Hawk Neck (1838)

Eagle Hawk Neck . . . has been appropriately termed 'the key to the peninsula'. This is of vital importance to the security of the prisoners on the peninsula, and will at all times (day and night) require the utmost attention and vigilance . . . [Should it be believed] that a prisoner, has effected his escape . . . to Forestier's Peninsula, a picket will be forwarded without delay to intercept them . . . to occupy East Bay Neck [Dunalley] with orders to take similar precautions as those adopted at Eagle Hawk Neck.

When prisoners are at large the Sentinels across the neck . . . to be most vigilant in the uneasiness of, or challenge of the chain of dogs; roving parties to be sent during the day [when prisoners are out], to scour the hills in front of the Neck.

No. 1 Sentinel will be posted on the Commissariat Stores, and prisoners hut . . . he will walk round the stores at least every half hour; he will immediately report anything he may observe like the appearance of smoke or fire in the bush, any raft or timber floating across the bay, the noise of chopping or sawing trees, or anyone attempting to swim across the bay, or any suspicious circumstance that may come under his observation . . . After sunset he will challenge all persons approaching his post and detain anyone not knowing the countersign . . .

No. 2 Sentinel will be posted on the Mount in advance of the guard house; he will immediately report the approach of any person . . . or any suspicious circumstances that may come under his observation; at sunset he will be posted on or near the beach [at] Pirates Bay in rear of the dogs; he will be most alert to every move or warning from the dogs, or anything stirring on the beach or apparently in the surf and if necessary immediately alarm the guard . . .

'Few duties more irksome'

from a British military magazine, 1851

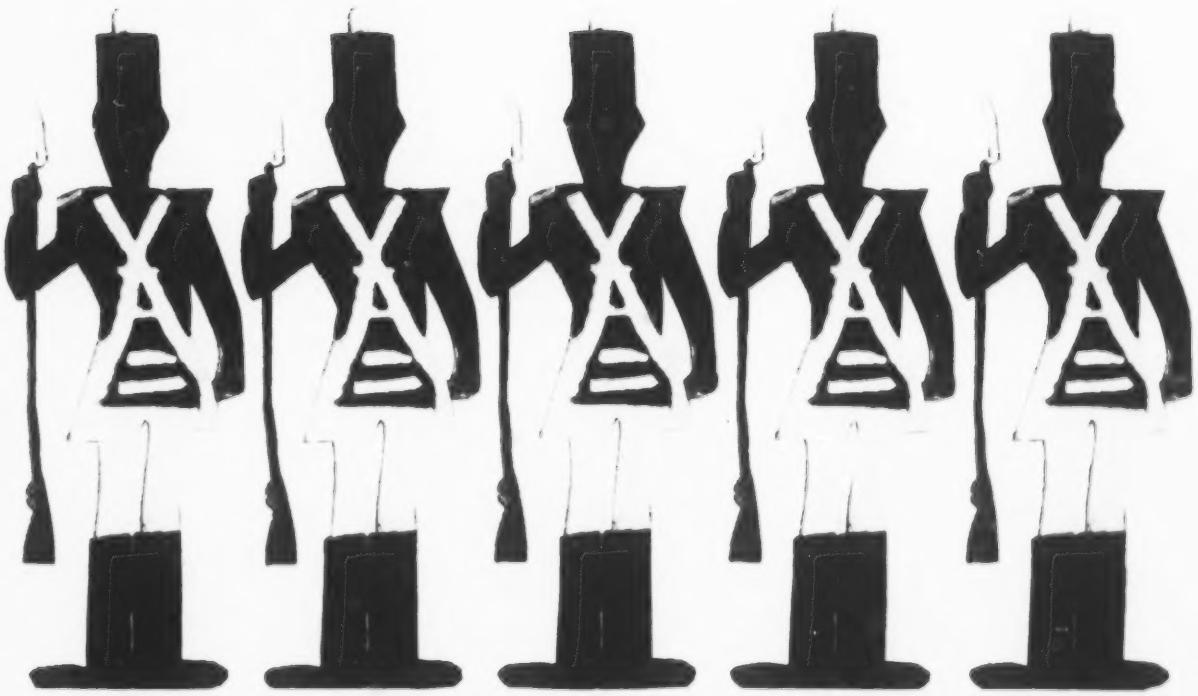
Although . . . [convict administration is no longer performed by] the Military, the disagreeables attendant on the system are still inflicted

on the troups. On them still devolves the inconvenience of being scattered in small detachments to watch convict stations . . . to furnish guards over convicts on board ship, and sentries over chain gangs on shore. On them rests the moral pollution of contact with, and the degrading spectacle of seeing gangs of ruffians round them on all sides, and at all hours.

Theirs is the privation of being exiled from towns, and companionship with their fellows, to some speck on the ocean, some partially cleared spot in the bush. The terra incognita of Tasman's Peninsula, the ultima Thule of Norfolk Island, the military hot-house of Cockatoo Island! Theirs the privation of living for months on such monotonous and dainty fare as a Commissariat store may be able to supply. Theirs the lot of being immured for two months in a signal hut on the summit of an almost inaccessible hill, amidst endless forests . . . [The soldier's duties] are not only severe and wearisome, but are attended frequently with danger . . .

There are few duties more irksome, requiring more vigilance, presence of mind and fertility in resources, than those of a guard embarked over prisoners of the crown, on a coasting voyage, or in course of transfer from one penal settlement to another.

LOOKING FURTHER: Background 4 tells of the division of responsibility between civil and military authority. **Background 8** and **Eyewitness 9** provide accounts of escape attempts through Eaglehawk Neck. **Profiles 10** and **33** are about soldiers' lives.



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EYEWITNESS 18

A political prisoner

William Smith O'Brien at Port Arthur

The following is an extract from the daily journal of ***O'Brien*** *(Profile 35), written while he was confined to the small cottage at Port Arthur that now bears his name. His was a special case: his relatively privileged treatment should be compared with that of* ***Linus Miller,*** *an American political prisoner at Port Arthur (Profile 14).*

The prison which has been allotted to me consists of two small rooms situated in a very cheerful position (if a prospect can be called cheerful which overlooks a great gaol) and I acknowledge with candour that the arrangements appear to have been made with a view to secure my health and to provide for me reasonable portion of the premises . . . to complete solitude. (My prison adjoins the barracks and I am now under a military guard, the sentry paces backwards and forwards within the garden walls.)

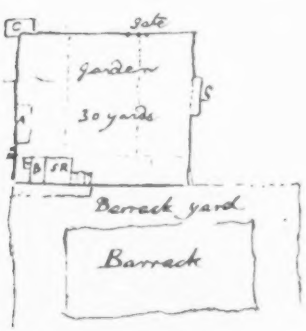
Two sentries, paid 5s 6d a day, took turns in guarding O'Brien.

My apartments are cheerful and airy. Their position is elevated and healthy. I have been supplied with a bookcase and cupboard, four tables, washing stand, four chairs with very hard seats, being such as are used in kitchens in Ireland. I have adequate supply of earthenware. I sleep on an iron bedstead two feet three inches wide. I have access at all hours when not locked up to a garden about thirty yards square and I am permitted to walk in a piece of ground about fifty yards long and thirty yards wide which has been railed in for this purpose, for one hour in the forenoon provided I am ready to go there before half past ten o'clock. During this time an armed constable remains in the enclosure. During the day I am guarded by a sentry whose movements are governed by a code of instructions which I have not read but which appears to extend to a length which could scarcely be requisite of the continual directions respecting the dispositions of an army for a great engagement. At night an additional sentry, an armed constable, takes up his position near my abode. Two powerful lamps throw light round my dwelling at night. At seven o'clock in the morning my door is unlocked by the acting superintendent . . . to ascertain my presence in my quarters. This is done three or four times a day . . . [He] is forbidden . . . to hold any unnecessary communication with me.

At a few minutes after seven an Overseer attended by a convict comes and lights my fire. I then prepare my breakfast which consists of dry bread and coffee and a scrap of meat if I can save any from the dinner of the preceding day. No eggs, no butter (contraband or otherwise) are permitted to reach me... Whilst these operations are going on (i.e. dishes washed and floor swept) I dress myself, make my bed and settle my bedroom which is a sort of sanction to which the profane are not admitted except when it is inspected by the Superintendent. At two I dine, my dinner consisting of a pound of

O'Brien's Cottage—sketch plan from his Journal.

SR—Sitting-room; B—Bedroom, A—Shed used at first by sentry, who was subsequently removed; C—Station for armed constable, added after my arrival; S—Sentry.



meat and a pound of potatoes. A pound and a half of flour is allowed daily for bread, which I am told makes a two pound loaf . . . I am allowed plenty of milk, plenty of very coarse sugar, enough tea and coffee. After dinner the Overseer and his attendant come again to wash the dishes and at half an hour before sunset the Superintendent locks me up. At present I do not feel great inconvenience from being locked up an hour before dark, but in summer this arrangement will deprive me of the most agreeable hour of the day and in winter it will make the evenings intolerably long. Let me remark that ordinary convicts are not locked up till half past eight o'clock . . . As the greatest possible pains appear to have been taken to prevent the soldiers from holding any communication with me and as I have neither much opportunity nor much disposition to commune with the overseers the life which I now lead is if not so solitary at least as nearly speechless as it could be made. I am allowed to read books *ad libitum*.

SMITH O'BRIEN'S COTTAGE

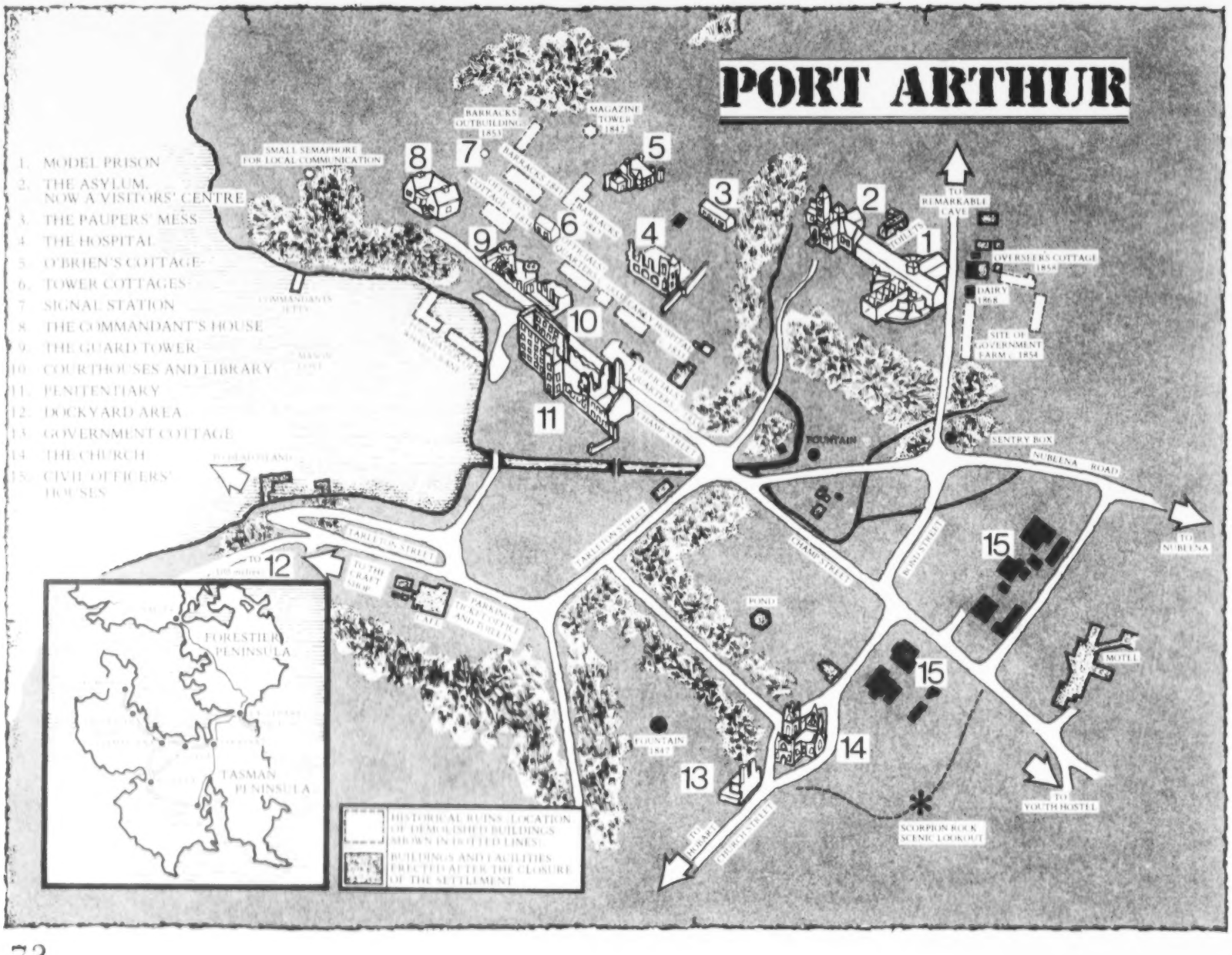
When this cottage was built in 1849, it was probaby meant to be used as a stable

Smith O'Brien was the leader of the Young Ireland Party. He was confined to the cottage between August and November in 1850, because of an unsucessful attempt to escape from Maria Island to the United States

Smith O'Briens Cottage more recently was used as a Youth Hostle. It is also one of the few houses that has been restored to its condition during the convict period.

KATHLEEN

LOOKING FURTHER: **Eyewitness 15** contains accounts of the procedure for common prisoners. **Eyewitness 7** tells of other forms of informal contact between free people and prisoners. In addition to **Profile 35** (O'Brien), the stories of Frost **(Profile 30)** and Miller **(Profile 14)** tell of the lives of political prisoners at Port Arthur.


PORT ARTHUR
1. MODEL PRISON
2. THE ASYLUM, NOW A VISITORS' CENTRE
3. THE PAUPERS' MESS
4. THE HOSPITAL
5. O'BRIEN'S COTTAGE
6. TOWER COTTAGES
7. SIGNAL STATION
8. THE COMMANDANT'S HOUSE
9. THE GUARD TOWER
10. COURTHOUSES AND LIBRARY
11. PENITENTIARY
12. DOCKYARD AREA
13. GOVERNMENT COTTAGE
14. THE CHURCH
15. CIVIL OFFICERS' HOUSES
BARRACKS OUTBUILDING 1851
MAGAZINE TOWER 1847
SMALL SEMAPHORE FOR LOCAL COMMUNICATION
TO REMARKABLE CAVE
OVERSEER'S COTTAGE 1858
DAIRY 1868
SITE OF GOVERNMENT FARM c. 1854
COMMANDANT'S JETTY
MASON CELL
FOUNTAIN
SENTRY BOX
NUBEENA ROAD
TO NUBEENA
CHAPEL STREET
BOND STREET
POND
MOTEL
FOUNTAIN 1847
TO YOUTH HOSTEL
SCORPION ROCK SCENIC LOOKOUT
TO DUNALLEY
FORESTIER PENINSULA
TASMAN PENINSULA
HISTORICAL RUINS – LOCATION OF DEMOLISHED BUILDINGS SHOWN IN DOTTED LINES
BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES ERECTED AFTER THE CLOSURE OF THE SETTLEMENT